DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 226 617 FL 013 561

AUTHOR	Singler, John Victor; And Others
TITLE	An Introduction to Liberian English.
INSTITUTION	Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. African Studies Center.; Peace Corps, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	253p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC11 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	African Languages; *Cultural Education; Dialogs (Language); Grammar; Language Variation; *Listening Comprehension; *Nonstandard Dialects; *Second Language Instruction; Standard Spoken Usage; Vocabulary
IDENTIFIERS	*English (Liberian); *Liberia

ABSTRACT

The aim of this text is to introduce Liberian English, which includes the many varieties of English spoken by Liberians, to Peace Corps volunteers. The text is divided into two sections. The first part talks about Liberian English, while the second part uses Liberian English to describe aspects of contemporary Liberian culture. Part one contains discussions of the histories, varieties, pronunciation, and grammar of Liberian English. Where possible, differences from variety to variety of Liberian English with regard to pronunciation and grammar are noted. Part two of the text concentrates on "mainstream" Liberian English (referred to as vernacular Liberian English), particularly as it is spoken in Monrovia. Emphasis is on understanding the type of English widely used in informal contexts by people who have gone to Western schools. The aim of the text is to facilitate volunteers' understanding of the language; there is no emphasis on learning to speak the language because of the Liberian attitudes toward varieties of Liberian English other than Liberian Standard English. (NCR)

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AN INTRODUCTION TO LIBERIAN ENGLISH

BY

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with

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1981

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The help of Gbehwalahyee Mason and David Peewee of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Lucia Massalee of the University of Liberia, and Boima Barclay of Cuttington University College in the preparation of Part Two of this book and--especially--the accompanying cassette is gratefully acknowledged. Boakai Zoludua of the University of Liberia also provided extensive aid in the production of Part Two.

Lending their expertise to specific sections of the second part were the following people: Daniel Pewu (Proverbs), Sumoyea Guluma and Pewu Bodegie (Lorma Feasts), Annie Freeman (Malapropisms), George Freeman (Queen Contests), and Korto Marwolo and Ophelia Kennedy (Cuisine and Coiffures).

Others whom I wish to thank include the following:

O. Eugene Shaw, editor of Focus, for permission to use episodes of What Did John Say?,

Olivia Shannon, assistant managing director of ELBC, and ELBC for permission to use an announcement prepared by and broadcast on that station,

Don Kovac and the staff of the Institute for Liberian Languages for the use of the Institute's facilities,

Dr. Charles Martin and the staff of Peace Corps Liberia--in particular, Tom Wheeler--for their assistance, and

PCV's throughout Liberia but especially the Volunteers of Zorzor for their hospitality and helpful comments.

I have benefited from conversations about Liberian English with Father Tom Mercer of Voinjama. The present work also draws on work done previously for the Peace Corps by Dr. Warren d'Azevedo of the University of Nevada and by Tom Wheeler.

Both Dr. Elizabeth Tonkin of the University of Birmingham and Dr. d'Azevedo read a preliminary draft of this work. The present version has benefited from their many helpful comments.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks to Kay Irish and the others at the African Studies Center of Michigan State University for their ready assistance. I am beholden to Prof. David Dwyer for his advice, kindness, and support throughout the preparation of this work.

HOW TO USE AN INTRODUCTION TO LIBERIAN ENGLISH

The text, An Introduction to Liberian English, has two parts. Part One discusses Liberian English, specifically, its history, varieties and variation within it, its pronunciation, and its grammar. Part Two uses Liberian English to describe aspects of contemporary Liberian culture.

There is a ninety-minute cassette accompanying the text. At the beginning of this cassette are listening exercises which are tied to the discussion of Liberian English pronunciation found in Chapter Three of Part One. The remainder of the cassette is tied to Part Two. For all but one of the eighteen units on Liberian life which comprise Part Two, there are short monologues and dialogues in Liberian English.

It is not necessary to read Part One before beginning Part Two. The two can be read independently of each other or concurrently.

The following procedure is recommended for Part Two: for a given unit, read the introduction to that unit. Then, put the book aside and listen to the appropriate segment of the tape. Listen to it once or twice; try to see how much of it you understand. Then, using the transcript that appears in the book, read along as you listen to the tape again. After that, look at the notes which follow each transcript. You may want to listen to the tape again after you have read the notes. Half of the units contain more than one taped segment. In those cases, follow the procedure outlined above for one segment at a time.

INTRODUCTION

"Liberian English" is best understood as a cover term encompassing the many varieties of English spoken by Liberians: thus, it is the English of those for whom English is the first and only language as well as the English of those for whom it is a second or third or even fourth language, of those who have graduated from college and those who have never had a day of Western schooling, of sailors who have traveled up and down the coast and farmers who have rarely ventured beyond the village of their birth. It is the English of the coast and the English of the interior, of the capital and the half-town (hamlet), of old people and young, of men and women. "Liberian English" is perhaps even less of a homogeneous entity than is "American English" or "British English." Still, despite this diversity, the varieties of "Liberian English" do share certain features, features which set them apart from the types of English spoken in other countries. Liberian English is not "better" or "worse" than American or British or Nigerian English, but is different from them. And because it is different, an introduction to it can be beneficial to foreigners in Liberia.

Although this book is an introduction to Liberian English, it does not claim to be able to provide an introduction to every variety of Liberian English. There is no need to provide Americans with an extensive introduction to the most formal variety, Liberian Standard English; that is the variety of Liberian English most like American English, specifically, like American Standard English. Regarding the other end of the spectrum--the socially stigmatized English furthest removed from Standard English--Liberians would take exception were this introduction to concern itself too extensively with this. (What introduction to American speech written for non-Americans deals extensively with the speech of, say, high-school dropouts?)

This book is divided into two sections. The first part <u>speaks about</u> Liberian English; the second part <u>is</u> Liberian English. The first part contains discussions of the history, varieties, pronunciation, and grammar of Liberian English. Where possible, differences from variety to variety of Liberian English with regard to pronunciation and grammar are noted. The second part of the book concentrates on "mainstream" Liberian English (called here Vernacular Liberian English), particularly as it is spoken in Monrovia. That is, it is the type of Liberian English widely used in informal contexts by people who have gone to Western schools.

1. ON SPEAKING LIBERIAN ENGLISH

The focus of this book has been on facilitating Volunteers' <u>understanding</u> of Liberian English. Thus, there are taped exercises accompanying the discussion of the pronunciation of Liberian English in order to help Volunteers recognize Liberian pronunciation rules, but there are no exercises and no drills to help Volunteers sound like Liberians. There are many reasons for this.

The most important has to do with Liberian attitudes towards varieties of Liberian English other than Liberian Standard English. These attitudes in turn reflect Liberia's history since 1822, the year the first group of black American emigrants settled on Providence Island (in the mouth of the river which flows through what is now Monrovia). In the Settlers' version of Liberian history from 1822 to 1980, part of their right to rule all Liberians came from their command of English, the English of Shakespeare and Emerson. Here is what Alexander Crummell, a Liberian orator, of the last century, had to say in 1860:

> *Here, on this coast...is an organized negro community, republican in form and name; a people possessed of Christian institutions and civilized habits, with this one marked peculiarity, that is, that in color, race, and origin, they are identical with the masses around them; and yet speak the refined and cultivated English language.*[1]

It followed from the viewpoint championed by Crummell that Liberians with Western education would treat speakers on non-standard English with contempt.* Moreover, to suggest that the English of westernized Liberians differed from American Standard English or that non-standard Liberian English had any value as a medium of communication continued to meet with official disfavor as recently as the Tolbert administration.

Thus, Liberian English has had a dubious reputation among its speakers. Even with the events of April, 1980, and the end of the Settlers' hegemony, the idea the Settlers brought with them--that Liberian English was somehow inferior to American English--has persisted. (This attitude fails, of course, to recognize either the completeness of Liberian English--including non-standard Liberian English--as a speech system or its extensive use as a medium of communication among all Liberians.) Given the ambivalence which many Liberians feel towards Liberian English, the American who uses Liberian English is suspected--particularly by Liberians fluent in Standard English--of talking down to Liberians or making fun of them. This is especially true of the American whose Liberian English is always the same--regardless of whether he or she is talking to a Deputy Minister in the latter's office or buying fish in the market.

A second reason why this introduction to Liberian English concentrates on comprehension rather than production is that generally Volunteers have more trouble understanding Liberians than Liberians have understanding Volunteers. Before the start of their Peace Corps training, most Volunteers have had little opportunity to hear Liberian speech, but many Liberians hear American speech every day. Among Liberian speakers of English, most have probably met Americans before, have perhaps seen American films, and have certainly spent hundreds of hours listening to ELWA, the Monrovia-based evangelical Christian radio station run by American missionaries. This

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*A distinction needs to be maintained between the nineteenth-century Settlers' view of English and the Settlers' English. The latter is discussed in Chapters One and Two.

does not mean that Volunteers can speak the same way in a village in Nimba as they would on the streets of New York City and expect to be understood. But if Volunteers speak clearly and not too fast and if they adjust their vocabulary to their audience (avoiding idioms and slang unfmailiar to Liberians), they will increase the likelihood of their being understood.

The fact that the production of Liberian English has been omitted from this introductory book does not mean that you as a PCV should never speak Liberian English. For some words and with some speakers, you will have to Liberianize your speech in order to be understood. And you will find some uniquely Liberian phenomena and situations for which American English is ill-equipped. (Besides, whether this occurs consciously or not, people's speech often takes on qualities of the speech of those with whom they are in daily contact.)

However, as you find yourself using Liberian English expressions and pronunciation, be mindful of your audience and the social setting. In American English, you adjust your language--your rate of speech, your vocabulary, your articulation--to the audience and the situation; you have had years of practice at doing this. Given the ambivalence of Liberian attitudes towards Liberian English, it is even more important to do this in Liberian English. Since you have not yet had years of practice in this milieu, you will have to be especially sensitive to the audience and the social setting.

2. LISTENING

Listening is the key to learning all phases of Liberian English. At the same time as you are using this book and even after you have worked your way through it, be listening to the English spoken around you. In his "Communications in Liberia (English)--A Guide to Observing," Tom Wheeler suggests the following:

> *. . .speakers of English who are from different places often have to pay careful attention to each other's pronunciation, inflection, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions if they want to communicate effectively with each other.*
>
> *In addition to listening carefully to the sounds of each other's English, it is also necessary to pay attention to gestures and other nonverbal cues that also affect the meaning of messages being sent back and forth between speakers.*[2]

Wheeler then suggests a series of questions to "help you focus on some of the differences between Liberian and American English." The answers to these questions can only come from listening to Liberians when they talk. Some of the questions which Wheeler asks are the following:

1. *What expressions do people use when:*

   a. *getting attention,*
   b. *giving directions,*
   c. *making requests for themselves,*
   d. *making requests for others,*
   e. *apologizing,*
   f. *expressing sympathy,*
   g. *giving approval,*
   h. *expressing disapproval or dissatisfaction,*
   i. *expressing indifference,*
   j. *gossiping about others,*
   k. *abusing/maligning a third party not present.*

2. *What are some expressions that are common to both Liberian and American English? Do they mean the same thing in both?*

3. *What are some words of expressions used in Liberian English that seem to have no counterpart in American English (e.g., words or expressions concerning items or situations that one does not encounter in the U.S.)?*

4. *What differences do you notice in the way English is spoken by various groups of Liberians (i.e., of various educational, ethnic, and socio-economic levels) when speaking to each other, to someone from a different social level, and to foreigners?*

5. *What are the reactions of these various groups of Liberians to the use of Liberian English by foreigners (especially PCV's)?*

FOOTNOTES

[1]Crummell, Alexander, "The English Language in Liberia," Independence Day Oration, Harper, Liberia, July 26, 1860, p. 9.

[2]Wheeler, Tom, A Small Collection of Expressions from Liberian Speech, p. 17.

[3]Wheeler, ibid, pp. 17-18.

AN INTRODUCTION TO LIBERIAN ENGLISH

PART ONE:

ABOUT LIBERIAN ENGLISH

----------CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH----------

To understand something of the rich character and diverse composition of Liberian English, it is helpful to examine the forces and events which have helped to shape it. Among the most salient are the following:

the coming of the Europeans to West Africa, particularly the Portuguese and the English,
the development of West African coastal pidgins,
the arrival of the emigrants from the New World,
the character of indigenous Liberian languages,
the influence of other West African varieties of English, and
the ongoing American ties with Liberia.

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEST AFRICAN COASTAL PIDGINS: 1461-1822

The first Europeans known to have reached the Liberian coast were the Portuguese sailor Pedro deCintra and his crew in 1461. In the century and more that followed, the Portuguese began trading along the West African coast. Apparently, a Portuguese-based trade language was used. The first English ships, the Lion and Primrose, came to the Liberian coast in 1553. As English dominance increased, the Portuguese-based trade language was apparently supplanted by an English-based one through the replacement of Portuguese words with English ones. Still, some words of Portuguese origin survive in the Liberian English spoken today: for example, *sabi*, 'to know' (from Port. *sabir*); *pekin*, 'child' (from Port. *pequeno*, 'little, small'); *cavalla*, 'a type of large fish' (from *cavalla*, 'horse mackerel'); and a host of place names--among others, Mesurado, Cestos, and Cape Palmas.

The trade languages formed the basis of pidgins. A pidgin is a language which arises over a period of time as people lacking a common language attempt to communicate with one another. Frequently, as in the African case, pidgins arose in trading situations. Evidently, almost all (more than ninety per cent) of the words in the English-based West African pidgin were English in origin, but their pronunciation conformed to the pronunciation rules of West African languages. As is the case in other pidgins, the English-based West African pidgin had a simplified grammar, simplified by the absence of inflections. That is, pidgins rarely employ grammatical affixes such as verb endings. For example, in modern West African Pidgin English, as spoken in Nigeria and Cameroon, the Standard English sentence

John was looking for his chickens.

is rendered as

John bin de fayn i fowl dem.

(*fayn* comes from Engl. find but means 'to look for'; *i* comes from Engl. he and in this context means 'his.') *bin* (from Engl. been) indicates that the action was completed in the past, and *de* indicates the progressive character of the action. (Note, also, that pidgins do not mark verbs so that they will

agree in person and number with the subject.) Finally, *dem* (from Engl. them) signals that more than one *fowl* is involved. Thus, the pidginized English sentence conveys the same information which is present in the Standard English sentence but without using any grammatical affixes. Indeed, the only complex words in a pidgin are compounds, and their structure is transparent. For example, in the modern pidginized English of Nigeria and Cameroon, there are words like *cow-pikin*, 'calf,' (literally, 'cow-child').

By the end of the eighteenth century, European and American ships had begun to stop along what is now the Liberian coast to pick up crews to man the ships as they proceeded down the African coast. The ships would stop again on their way back to Europe or America to drop off the sailors. These sailors are usually referred to as Krumen, but there were Bassas and Grebos in their numbers as well; the three groups--Kru, Bassa, and Grebo--are closely related linguistically and culturally.* In addition to manning the ships, the Krumen acted as middlemen between the Europeans and the Africans along the coast. In the process, the Kru served to shape the developing English-based pidgin and to spread it.

The pidgin appears to have been spoken all along the West African coast. So widespread was its use along the Liberian coast that Jehudi Ashmun, an early official of the American Colonization Society (the group which brought freed blacks to Liberia from the U.S.), wrote back to the States in the 1820's that

> *. . .every head man around us, and hundreds of their people speak, and can be made to understand our language without an interpreter.*[1]

An example of this pidginized variety of English appeared in an 1836 issue of the Liberia Herald, a Monrovia newspaper:

> *. . .Now pose war done, what I go do for git money? I can git slave for work my farm? I can git plenty oomon (woman)? Pose no war, I must put kinjar (a kind of wicker basket) my back all same slave. I get plenty oomon: ebery time I send all my friend, I say here you wife. . .*[2]

(The Herald supplied the parenthetical assistance. The Standard English equivalent of the passage is as follows:

> *. . .Now suppose war stopped, how would I get money? Could I get slaves to work on my farm? Could I get many women? If there were no war, I would have to put a kinjar on my back just like a slave. I have many women. Very often I send them as gifts to my friends, saying, "Here is a wife for you.". . .)*

With regard to this pidginized English, there is speculation that, all along the West African coast, slaves bound for the New World learned it--as a medium of communication with one another--while they were imprisoned along the coast waiting to be shipped, while they were en route to the New World, and after they arrived.

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*In the mid-nineteenth century, Liberia extended east to the San Pedro River, but such was the value of these sailors to the Europeans that French shippers--anxious to have access to "les kroumen" without having to go through Liberian officials--prevailed upon the French government to seize the land between the Cavalla and the San Pedro River.

One attribute of a pidgin is that it is no one's first language. Once a pidgin becomes the first, i.e. native, language of a people, its grammar expands, losing much of its simplicity. The resulting language is called a creole. In parts of the New World where the number was small of speakers of English (as opposed to speakers of an English-based pidgin) or where contact was limited between these speakers and slaves, the language spoken by those brought from Africa seems to have been a creole, an elaboration of the Atlantic pidgin which arose on the West African coast. The language of Jamaica, for example, was--and is--an English-based creole. Some scholars have suggested that, historically, the language of American blacks was a creole, too.

The relevance of the spread to the Western Hemisphere of the English-based speeck variety which had arisen in West Africa and that speech form's subsequent development in the New World lies in the fact that at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century blacks came back to West Africa from the New World. In addition to the emigration of blacks from America to Liberia under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, there was the emigration of blacks from Jamaica and Nova Scotia to Freetown, Sierra Leone, under the auspices of the British government. (The Nova Scotia blacks were Americans who had supported Britain in the American War of Independence and who had left the U.S. after the war. Their speech, presumably, did not differ from that of other American blacks of that era.) Krio, the language which evolved among Sierra Leone's "Creole" population, displays strong links with New World creoles. Moreover, because the British subsequently employed Sierra Leonean Creoles in their other West African colonies, Krio exerted a pronounced influence upon the varieties of English in all of these colonies. Indeed, it is legitimate to divide West African varieties of English into two groups: those found in Sierra Leone and the other countries in its linguistic aegis (the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon), and those found in Liberia.

2. THE ARRIVAL IN LIBERIA OF THE IMMIGRANTS

It was in 1822 that black Americans began to settle along the Liberian coast. From the 1820's until 1980, these Settlers and their descendants comprised the bulk of the Liberian elite and dominated the Liberian government. (Indeed, before the Tubman era, non-Settlers were largely excluded from the political and social activities of the dominant English-speaking class.) To understand the character of modern Liberian English, it is helpful to examine the English spoken by those who came here. Two facts are expecially important: the first is that the kinds of English spoken ranged along a continuum, from the speech of university graduates to that of field hands on Southern plantations. The second is that the field hands greatly outnumbered the university graduates. In the earliest years of the Liberian colony, Ashmun complained that not one immigrant had had even a "plain English education."[3] A study by Shick (1971) of Liberian immigrants in the first two decades after the establishment of the colony showed that only twenty per cent of them showed any evidence of being literate. Still later, a Settler writing in a Liberian newspaper complained that "the common rule" with regard to recent immigrants was that they were "the no money, no A.B.C. men, that come directly from the plantation."[4]

While the language of the early Liberian intelligentsia was no doubt Standard American English, it is virtually impossible to determine what the majority of the Liberian immigrants were speaking, i.e., how American blacks from the South spoke who had been denied formal education. (As suggested above, it is possible that their speech would be best described as a creolized variety of a pidginized form of English.) Still, enough of the speech of Southern rural blacks in the early nineteenth century is known to make it clear that it shares many features with comtemporary Liberian English, especially that spoken by the descendants of the Setglers. For example, a word such as *chunk*, 'to throw (a rock) at,' the second person plural pronoun *yall* (from you all,) and the completive marker *done* (as in "That boy done eat all the rice.") are all features found in the speech of Southern blacks.*

(Not all the emigrants from the New World came from the United States, however. In 1865, for example, the Cora brought 346 settlers from Barbados. Many from this group rose to prominence in Liberian society, and it is possible that they exerted an influence on Liberian English out of proportion to their number.)

3. THE LOCAL LANGUAGES

Just as West African languages in general contributed to the development of the Portuguese-based and then the English-based West African pidgins, so Liberian languages contributed to the development of a Liberian English. The clearest influence of Liberian languages upon Liberian English shows up in the pronunciation rules of Liberian English.** For example, perhaps the most noticeable characteristic (to an American) of Liberian English is the loss of consonants at the ends of syllables. While a few indigenous Liberian languages (Kpelle, Vai, Belle, and Gola) do permit a nasal consonant at the end of a syllable, they do not permit any other consonant to occur there. Other languages (such as Kru, Grebo, and Lorma) do not permit any consonant at the end of a syllable. Thus, Liberian English reflects the pronunciation patterns of Liberian languages when a sentence like

Bold Dollar saved my life.

is pronounced

bo' dala se' ma lay'.

---

*In Southern black speech, however, done takes the past rather than the unmarked form of the main verb, e.g.

That boy done ate all the rice.

**Liberian English, too, is an indigenous Liberian language, for surely it was born here. However, the term "indigenous Liberian language" is used in this book to refer to those languages which were spoken here prior to the coming of Europeans and European-based languages, i.e. the languages of the Mande, Kru, and West Atlantic groups.

Similarly, no indigenous Liberian language has a th sound, neither the th (ð) of thy nor the th (θ) of thigh. Although these sounds--particularly the latter--do occur in the prestige varieties of Liberian English, they are most often rendered as d and t, respectively, thy being pronounced like 'die' and thigh like 'tie.'

The influence of indigenous Liberian languages on Liberian English, while most conspicuous with regard to pronunciation, is hardly confined to that aspect of the language. Many vocabulary items come directly from Liberian languages. For example, *gbasa jɑmba*, 'cassava leaf'; *jaɾen* (or *jafe*), 'money'; *mɑnjaa*, 'chief' (a friendly appellation); and *musu*, 'woman, especially a young girl'--all of them words used in Monrovia--came into Liberian English from Vai. (In general, owing to their longer and more extensive interaction with Liberian English, coastal languages have had a greater influence on it.) Other words and phrases are translated literally from other Liberian languages into English. For example, the Liberian English sentence

He got big heart.

can be translated into Standard English by

'He is excessively ambitious and self-centered.'

That same translation into Standard English would fit the comparable sentence from any number of indigenous Liberian languages, e.g.,

Kru ɔ̄ɔ́ wlō̤ bɛ̄á
his heart big
Lit.: 'His heart is big.'

Vai à fàlá kòlò.
his heart big
Lit.: 'His heart is big.'

Grammatical features of Liberian English, too, can be linked to corresponding features in Liberian. Most Liberian languages use their word for 'come' as a way to mark the future, especially the immediate future, e.g.,

Kru nā́ jī dɛ̄ dī.
I come thing eat
'I'm coming to eat something.'
i.e., 'I'm about to eat.'

Lorma gà vààzú lìizú.
I coming going
'I'm about to go.'

Liberian English uses coming in the same way:

I coming eat.
'I'm about to eat.'

Similarly, the pronominal divisions of many varieties of Liberian English can be traced to indigenous Liberian languages, as demonstrated by the following chart of subject pronouns comparing American Standard English, Kpelle, and the variety of Liberian English most removed from Standard English. (Kpelle is here representative of indigenous Liberian languages.)

American Standard English		Kpelle		Liberian Pidgin English	
I	we	n	kū	a	wi
you	you	f	kā	yu	yɔɔ
he,she, it	they	ɲ	dī	i	de

(A phonetic spelling rather than the usual spelling has been used for Liberian Pidgin English.) Standard American English distinguishes three third-person singular pronouns: he, she, it. Kpelle has only one third-person singular pronoun; Liberian Pidgin English, too, has only one. Standard American English has a single form for both second-person singular and second-person plural pronouns. Liberian Pidgin English makes the same distinction that Kpelle does. The form of the pronouns in Liberian Pidgin English is English in origin (each of them coming from a Standard English form--a is from I and i is from he--except yɔɔ, which comes from Southern American English y'all), but the divisions are those of Liberian languages.

4. OTHER INFLUENCES

The scenario which has been proposed thus far is meant to suggest that three primary forces have given Liberian English its present character:

the development, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of a West African coastal pidgin,
the arrival in Liberia of blacks from the United States, and
the influence of indigenous Liberian languages.

Two other forces, while less fundamental, have also helped to shape Liberian English:

influence from other West African English-based speech varieties, especially Krio, and
the American "connection" with Liberia.

4.1 Other West African English-Based Speech Varieties

Contact with Krio and modern West African Pidgin English, itself heavily influenced by Krio, occurred in several different ways. Given their similar histories and situations, the Creoles of Sierra Leone and the Settlers of Liberia have long been in contact. Also as Krio has extended into the interior of Sierra Leone, the Liberian ethnic groups on the Sierra Leone border--the Vai, Gola, Mende, Bandi, and Kisi--have come into contact with it. However, probably the most extensive contact came about through the Kru. Kru settlements sprang up, first in Sierra Leone (in Freetown), then in the Gold Coast (in Accra, Takoradi, Sekondi, and elsewhere) and Nigeria (in Lagos). It was usual for young Krumen to spend several years working on ships or in these cities and then to return home. Thus, the Krumen, who had in earlier years played a crucial role in the development and spread of English--or, more precisely, pidginized English--all along the coast, subsequently brought features of other West African varieties of English back to Liberia.

Some of the examples of Krio words which have entered Liberian English are *grɔna*, 'a street urchin; irresponsible': *bisabadi*, 'a meddlesome person' (originally from Eng. busybody): and *kabaslot*, 'a dress style.' From Nigeria (perhaps through Sierra Leone) come *gari*, 'coarsely powdered cassava,' and *susu*, 'a money co-operative.'

Additionally, some grammatical features are widespread in the English-based speech varieties of West Africa. However, it is not always possible to determine whether such features can be traced to the early West African English-based pidgin or whether they developed at a later time in one country and then spread to the others. Such a case is the progressive marker de which occurs in some varieties of Liberian English (also as le, dɛ, and lɛ), e.g.,

We de talk something serious. 'We are discussing something important.'

This marker also occurs in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Cameroun, and perhaps other West African Countries.

4.2 American Influence on Liberian Speech

In Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and the other former British colonies, the accent of the most prestigious speakers of English displays many British features. Since, for a century and more, power was in the hands of people with very British accents, it is not surprising that a British accent carried prestige. In recent decades, this association of prestige with a British accent has been re-inforced by the many Sierra Leoneans, Nigerians, Ghanaians, and Gambians who have gone to Britain for further study and then returned home. The political, social, and educational leaders of these countries are, for the most part, "been-tos," i.e., they have "been to" Britain.

In Liberia, on the other hand, power was never in the hands of the British. It rested with the most highly educated of the American emigrants, people who may well have spoken American Standard English. Moreover, in the years since 1822, America has remained the primary source of prestige for the Western-oriented segment of Liberian society.* Liberians who go abroad for further study most often go to the States.

Two American speech varieties especially continue to carry prestige with Liberians and, therefore, to influence Liberian speech. The first is American Standard English. Where textbooks are available for Liberian schools, they are almost always American ones. From 1822 to the present, Liberia's primary political, educational, and religious ties with the West have been with the U.S. Thus, the number of government officials, teachers, and missionaries from the U.S. has always been far greater than that from any other Western nation. What these people speak has been American English and--especially in formal contexts--very often American Standard English.

The second influential American speech variety has been Black English. Many Liberians who have gone to the States have returned with a distinctive accent which Liberians call Kohloh. The accent is imitative of Black American speech; the name Kohloh is from the English word colored. In addition, Black American popular music is heard throughout Liberia. Black American slang often finds its way into Liberian speech--from zoot and dig of earlier eras to rap and bad (as a positive term) more recently.** No doubt the popularity of Black American music has facilitated the spread of Black English slang in Liberia.

Through a number of channels, then, Liberians have continued to be in contact with speakers of two American speech varieties, American Standard English and Black English. Because prestige among the Western-oriented in Liberia has continued to be associated with America, American dialects--rather than British ones--have provided the "target" for Liberian English speech.

5. CONCLUSION

In discussing the various influences upon Liberian English, efforts

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*Elizabeth Tonkin (personal communication) notes that one segment of Liberian society for which British English served most decidedly as a prestige source up to the 1950's was the 'Krumen,' i.e. the Kru (Klao), Grebo, and Bassa. The extensive immigration of Krumen to the Gold Coast and--to a lesser extent--Sierra Leone and Nigeria placed them within the British sphere.

**dig is a very old Black English word (coming originally, David Dalby suggests, from Wolof, a Senegalese language). However, it appears not to have entered Liberian speech until the 1960's--after it had become a widely used word in American slang.

have been made to provide instances where a given influence source clearly gave rise to some phenomenon in Liberian English. In fact, it is often difficult and, indeed, misleading to single out one or another force as the source of some phenomenon in Liberian English. Various traditions tend to re-inforce one another. An example of this is the comparative construction found in a sentence like

John big pass James.
'John is bigger than James.'

This construction uses the English pass.* It is paralleled in many Liberian (and other West African) languages in that, in these languages, the comparative word is--or is derived from--the same word as the verb, 'to pass.'

Kru: John sɪ̄ nā́ slā̀ pēplākā.
John pass my house yesterday
'John passed my house yesterday.'

John bō̤á sì-o James.
John big pass James.
'John is bigger than James.'

At the same time, in the pidginized English of other West African countries, the sentence has the same form it has in Liberian English:

John big pass James.

(In fact, it is used much more extensively in other West African varieties of English than it is in Liberia, where John big than James is also widespread.) Thus, to say that this feature comes from Kru or Vai or Nigerian Pidgin is misleading: perhaps it comes from all of them.

Thus, the development of Liberian English can be seen not as a simple distortion of Standard English but as a linguistic entity which has endured pressures and influences from a variety of sources while remaining an effective means of communications to its users. Moreover, the effects of these forces on Liberian English have hardly been greater than those on English at the time of the Norman invasion: not only did modern English acquire sixty per cent of its vocabulary from these French-speaking conquerors, but it lost its Germanic inflectional system as well.

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*Many Liberians write past rather than pass. For most people who use this construction, there is no difference in the pronunciation of the two; moreover the words pass and past are clearly related semantically. The Kru sentence which was translated above as 'John passed my house yesterday' could just as correctly have been translated 'John went past my house yesterday.'

FOOTNOTES

[1]Ashmun, Jehudi, quoted in Gurley, Ralph Randolph, Life of Jehudi Ashmun. Washington: J.C. Dunn, 1835. Appendix, p. 30.

[2]Liberia Herald, April 15, 1836, p. 34.

[3]Family Visitory, quoted in African Repository, October, 1825, p. 236.

[4]Liberia Herald, August 2, 1854.

---CHAPTER 2: VARIATION AND VARIETY IN LIBERIAN ENGLISH---

This chapter explores variation and variety in Liberian English. As background, a description of Liberia's linguistic and ethnic groups is provided. Then, variation in individual speech is discussed. Finally, the varieties of Liberian English are introduced. While some of the grammatical features which characterize individual varieties are presented here, specific points of grammar in the individual varieties have generally been reserved for Chapter Four.

1. LIBERIA'S ETHNIC GROUPS AND THEIR LANGUAGES

The introduction to Liberia's various linguistic and ethnic groups which follows goes into more detail than is necessary for present purposes; this has been done in order to provide Volunteers with a picture of the ethnolinguistic mosaic which makes up the Liberian nation.

There are seventeen major Liberian ethnic groups:

Bandi	Gola	Lorma
Bassa	Kisi	Mandingo
Belle	Kpelle	Mano
Dey	Krahn	Mende
Grebo	Kru	Settler
Gio		Vai

They represent four different linguistic groups: Kru, West Atlantic, Mande, and Indo-European.*

Six ethnic groups in Liberia speak Kru languages: the Bassa, Belle, Dey, Grebo, Krahn, and Kru (Klao). On the basis of their linguistic characteristics, most Kru languages can be divided into two main groups, Western and Eastern. All the Liberian Kru languages except Belle fit into the Western group. (Kru languages are also widely spoken in the Ivory Coast.) Belle, while demonstrably a Kru language, fits into neither the Western group nor the Eastern group.

While each of the six Kru ethnic groups listed above possesses a certain internal uniformity in cultural institutions, from a linguistic point of view it is by no means clear that there is a single Bassa language, a single Kru (Klao) language, a single Krahn language, or a single Grebo language. Some of the dialects lumped together under, for example, Grebo may be better thought of as separate languages since speakers of one Grebo

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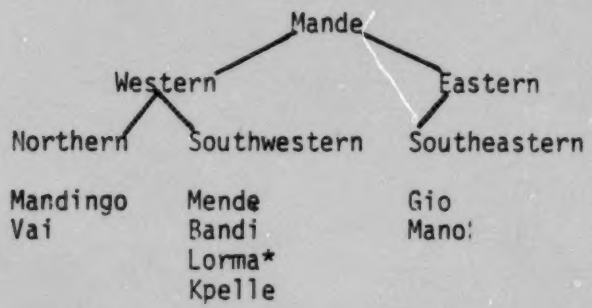
*Kru, West Atlantic, and Mande are all branches of Niger-Kordofanian, which is, like Indo-European, a language family. Niger-Kordofanian languages are spoken throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa; there are more than 1,200 of them.

dialect may be unable to understand speakers of some other Grebo dialect. In the case of Bassa, Kru (Klao), and Grebo, there is a definite dichotomy between "seaside" and "bush" dialects, but divisions, especially in Grebo, are not confined to this.

The Sapo people living in Sinoe County are, from a linguistic point of view, a part of the Krahn, as Sapo is a Krahn dialect (or language). There are also Krahn peoples in the Ivory Coast, where they are called Guéré.

The Gola and Kisi speak West Atlantic languages. The number of Kisi speakers residing in Liberia is smaller than that of either Guinea or Sierra Leone. The two languages--Gola and Kisi--are quite different from one another. West Atlantic languages spoken outside Liberian include Temne (in Sierra Leone), Wolof (in Senegal), and Fula (from Senegal and Guinea across to Cameroun).

There are eight Liberian ethnic groups speaking Mande languages. These groups are subdivided as follows:



Most of these groups are found outside Liberia as well. Thus, there are far more Mende in Sierra Leone than in Liberia and far more Mandingo in Guinea and elsewhere than in Liberia. The Liberian Mandingo are also called Manya, and their speech differs from that of non-Liberian Mandingo. There are Vai homelands in Sierra Leone, Kpelle and Lorma in Guinea (where the people are called Guerzé and Toma, respectively), and Gio in the Ivory Coast (where the people are called Dan). Mande languages are also widely spoken in Mali, Senegal, the Gambia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast.

The Settlers are the descendants of the freed American blacks who immigrated to Liberian in the nineteenth century. Their native language is Liberian English.

With regard to culture, a rough division of Liberia's ethnic groups

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*Lorma speakers call their language [lɔɔma]. In Liberian spelling, ɔ is usually spelled or. Liberian English is "r-less"; that is, a syllable-final r is not pronounced. Southern American English and Boston English are "r-less," too. Thus, to say a word like Lorma or Zorzor correctly, say it the way Rosalynn Carter or Edward Kennedy would say it.

can be made according to whether or not they have a tradition of secret-associations/bush-schools. (In Liberia, the men's association/school is usually called the Poro, and the women's, the Sande.) As a general rule, these associations are found in Liberia among the Mande and West Atlantic peoples but not among the Kru peoples or the Settlers. (The Settlers' secret associations are Western in origin: the Masons, Oddfellows, the United Brothers of Friendship, and their female analogues.) Owing to the antipathy--in some quarters at least--between Islam and secret associations of the Poro type, the predominantly Muslim Mandingo do not have Poro and Sande, thereby providing an exception to the generalization about Mande and West Atlantic groups and the Poro. On the other hand, some Kru groups in long contact with Mande and West Atlantic peoples do have associations/schools of this sort: the Belle, totally surrounded by Mande and West Atlantic peoples, as well as the Dey and, to a lesser extent, the Bassa fall into this category. Secret associations are reportedly found among other Kru groups as well, but these societies appear to lack the "bush-school" component which is one characteristic of associations of the Poro type.

(As the designation "secret association" suggests, knowledge about the character, composition, and activities of these organizations is not intended to be shared with non-initiates. Questions from non-members about the associations are not welcome. Moreover, since initiates are sworn to secrecy, the questions of non-initiates--however innocent in intention--are, in fact, requests that the initiates break their vows. Such questions not only place an initiate in an uncomfortable position, they also expose him or her to risk. Stories abound about initiates who revealed their secrets to non-initiates and lost their lives as a consequence.)

In addition to Liberia's own ethnic groups, three other groups are present in large numbers: non-Liberian Mandingo (most of whom are from Guinea), the Fula (who emigrated from Guinea in large numbers in the 1970's), and the Fante (fishing people from Ghana who reside in all the major coastal towns).

2. INDIVIDUAL VARIATION

The sum of all varieties of Liberian English forms a continuum from least standard-like to most standard-like. Any individual's speech is better thought of not as a point on the continuum but as a segment of the continuum.

An illustration of what this continuum involves and how an individual's speech relates to it can be provided (in grossly oversimplified terms) by looking at the following Liberian English answers to the question, "Where is Martha?"

He de for Monrovia.
He to Monrovia.
She to Monrovia.
She in Monrovia.
She is in Monrovia.

(There are, of course, more than five ways in which speakers of Liberian English would answer this question.)

These sentences have been arranged in order from least standard-like to most. Certain features can be identified as being more or less standard-like. For example, using he to refer to "Martha" is clearly less standard-like than using she. Also, the choice of prepositions provides a continuum; in the sentences above, for is least standard-like, in is standard, and to is in between. Using an overt copula (linking verb) is not per se more or less standard-like: while Mary de for Monrovia is presumably less standard-like than Mary in Monrovia, the latter is in turn less standard-like than Mary is in Monrovia. However, the selection of a copula fits into the continuum: de is least standard-like, ∅ (that is, no stated copula) is in between, and is is standard.

Given the continuum of five sentences presented above, it is incorrect to assume that each speaker of Liberian English would use only one of the sentences. While it is true that some speakers would only use one or another of the sentences in every context, by far the greater number of speakers would, at different times, use different sentences from the continuum. A speaker might answer He to Monrovia on some occasions and She to Monrovia on others, or a speaker might answer She to Monrovia on some occasions, She in Monrovia on others, and She is in Monrovia on still others.

For synonymous sentences like the five listed above, a number of factors influence which of them a speaker will use in a particular instance. The following factors favor less standard-like speech:

1) if the setting is an informal one. The more solemn, serious, or official the context, the more standard-like the level of speech will be.

2) if the speaker knows the listener well. People tend to be less formal with those whom they know well, more formal with those whom they have just met or do not know well.

3) if the listener displays many non-standard features in his or her own speech. People tend to adjust their speech towards the level of their listeners' speech.

4) if the listener is another Liberian. Americans are generally assumed to be speakers of standard speech; moreover, they are assumed to be unable to understand "deep" Liberian English.

5) if the speaker is emotionally involved in what he or she is saying. When people are excited, their speech tends to become less formal and, as a result in this instance, less standard-like.

These factors have been introduced to show part of the basis for variation in a person's speech. The speech of any one speaker of Liberian English should be thought of, then, not as occupying a point on the continuum of Liberian English but as commanding a range along it. The fewer of these factors favoring less standard-like speech which are present, the more standard-like the speech will tend to be. The example used to illustrate this variation has involved a series of sentences, but this

type of variation applies to word choice, to pronunciation, and to individual grammatical features.

Variation of the type described here is not a phenomenon confined to Liberian English or to pidgin and creole languages in general. It is characteristic of every language, of every speaker. However, because the extent of variation is apparently greater in pidginized and creolized language varieties, it is appropriate to call attention to it in a discussion of Liberian English.

A given speaker commands part of the range of Liberian English, not all. While a Liberian English speaker could be expected to understand all five sentences, he or she probably would not use all five. Among other things, the bounds of a given speaker's range depend upon the person's educational level (for the more standard-like end) and the person's sensitivity to the stigma attached to the features of less standard-like speech (for the less standard-like end).

3. VARIETIES OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH

The description of varieties of Liberian English which follows is especially tentative. A survey of types of Liberian English sufficiently extensive to establish with any certainty the differences between them has not been made. Still, there are some generalizations which can be put forth.

As noted with regard to the English of the individual, a Liberian English continuum has been posited. At one end of this continuum go the varieties which are most pidginized.* In Chapter One, a pidginized variety of English was characterized as being one in which the bulk of the vocabulary comes from English, the pronunciation rules come primarily from the speaker's first language (a pidgin having been defined in part as being no one's first language), and the grammar has been simplified by the absence of inflections such as verb endings. The most highly pidginized varieties, then, are the ones which retain, to the greatest extent, the pronunciation rules of languages other than English and display the simplest--here, least inflected--grammar. Illustrating this, Liberian Pidgin English--the variety of Liberian English furthest removed from Standard English--displays a largely uninflected grammatical system: for the most part, only the main form of the verb is used:

We de eat palaver sauce.	'We are eating palaver sauce.'
We fini eat palaver sauce.	'We have eaten palaver sauce.'
We eat palaver sauce the last time.	'We ate palaver sauce the other day.'

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*pidgin and creole, terms introduced in Chapter One, are not, in the Liberian case, discrete entities by any means. The pidginized varieties of English in Liberia show many creole features.

(While Liberian Pidgin English uses eat in all three sentences, Standard English uses three different forms, all of them different from the main form.) Along the continuum, as pronunciation becomes more and more English-like and as the grammar acquires more and more of the inflections and morphological complexities of Standard English, the variety becomes more and more depidginized.

Linguists usually differentiate speech varieties according to differences in the pronunciation and grammar of groups of speakers. Both the work done previously by Hancock (1971, 1975) and the present discussion base the classification of varieties of Liberian English almost entirely upon grammatical factors, pronunciation not being considered. In fact, in the Liberian case, the pronunciation of English is largely a function of two factors: 1) what the speaker's first language is, and 2) how much Western education the speaker has had.

The less Western education speakers have had, the greater the influence of the pronunciation patterns of their first language will be upon their pronunciation of English. Thus, the differences in the pronunciation of English between two speakers with different linguistic backgrounds--for example, if one speaker's first language is Grebo and the other's is Gio--will be far less profound if they are high school graduates than if they have not had Western schooling.

To return to the notion of "variety": there appear to be five varieties of Liberian English, namely, Liberian Pidgin English, Interior English, Vernacular Liberian English, Settler English, and Liberian Standard English.* With regard to varieties of Liberian English, Hancock (1971, p. 210) cautions: "It would be wrong to compartmentalize. . .varieties of Liberian English too rigidly; there is considerable inter-influence amongst them. . ." [1] At the same time, the characterizations of the individual varieties are idealizations. There is no speaker of Liberian English who displays all and only the features of one or another of these varieties.

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*Hancock (1971) posits four varieties of Liberian English: Standard Liberian English, Merico, Liberian Pidgin English, and Kru Pidgin English. Merico, as Hancock describes it, contains some of the qualities unique to what is here called Settler English but also many of the qualities found in what is here called Vernacular Liberian English. Although Liberian Pidgin English is put forward as being distinct from Kru Pidgin English, no distinguishing characteristics are enumerated.

Hancock (1975) is a reprint of the 1971 article: in an appendix, he and Piayon Kobbah argue for a fifth variety of Liberian English, spoken in the Cape Palmas area of Maryland County. The illustrations of it given in that appendix suggest that it is more properly thought of as a regional variant of what is here called Vernacular Liberian English than as a separate variety.

With regard to the Liberian English continuum, Liberian Pidgin English and Liberian Standard English can be seen as the two endpoints. The range between them is primarily taken up by the less standard-like Interior English and the more standard-like (yet still non-standard) Vernacular Liberian English. Settler English has a special status, discussed below.

Distance from Standard English should not be equated with lack of proficiency in English. To the contrary, many Liberian Pidgin English speakers are wholly fluent in that variety.

Liberian Pidgin English (LPE). The least standard-like variety of Liberian English is Liberian Pidgin English (LPE). This variety is descended from the West African pidgin of earlier centuries.

There are two subtypes of LPE, Kru Pidgin English and Soldier English. The former is the English-based speech variety of the "Krumen" and the communities in which they live. (Again, "Kru" and "Krumen" are used in the broader historical sense and encompass not only the Kru (Klao) but Bassa and Grebo seamen as well.) Soldier English is the speech variety of those men who--earlier in this century and with little or no previous contact with English--joined the Frontier Force (the forerunner of the Liberian National Guard) or went to the Firestone plantation to work. Subsequently, they helped to spread LPE throughout the interior.

Hancock cites the following characteristics of LPE:

1) it lacks gender distinction: that is, its pronoun system does not differentiate between male and female. Generally LPE speakers use i (or he) as the subject pronoun whether the person referred to is male or female.

2) it uses no as a negator, as in

I no talk that one. [a no tɔki da wɔ̃]
'I didn't say that.'

3) it uses for rather than to, as in

Pekin, try for go school, yah. [pekẽ, tra fɔ go suku, yaa]
'Child, try to attend school.'*

Also, as noted above, LPE relies almost exclusively on the main (uninflected) form of the verb, e.g. take in all environments, not takes, took, taken, or taking.

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*While Hancock specifically notes the use of for in place of preverbal to (that is, the to of infinitives), for is also used rather than the prepositional to (and other prepositions as well), e.g.

He go for hĩ̃ya house. [hi go fɔ hĩ̃yã̃ haa]
'He went to his house.'

While LPE is the variety of Liberian English furthest from Standard English, one must not infer from this that LPE lacks systematicity. The LPE treatment of copulas illustrates the variety's systematicity well; consequently, LPE copulas will be discussed in some detail. (The LPE copula system also provides a clear example of the influence of African languages upon African varieties of English.)

Linguists speak of three types of copular construction: equational, locational, and attributive:

Equational: He is my father.

Locational: He is at school.

Attributive: He is old.

In Standard English, the copula in all three constructions is some form of be (is, was, etc.), as illustrated above. However, West African languages tend to distinguish among the three. In Kru (Klao), for example, equational constructions use mo,

ɔ̄ mǭ ŋā́ mī́
he be my father
'He is my father.'

and locational constructions use nę.

ɔ̄ nę̄ kī́ súkū-slà kī́
he be in school-house in
"He is at school.'

Kru (Klao), like most West African languages, treats adjectives as a type of verb. As such, no copula is used in sentences like the following:

ɔ̄ kpákà
he old
'He is old.'

LPE parallels Kru (Klao) and languages like it. That is, one copula --be--is used for equational constructions,

He be my father.

a different copula--de--is used for locational constructions,

He de for school.

and no copula is used with adjectives,

He old.

LPE speakers do not say he de my father or he be for school because, in each case, it would be the wrong copula for the construction. Similarly, they do not say he de old (though some speakers might say he be old).

Interior English. More standard-like than LPE is Interior English. It is widely spoken outside Monrovia by those with little or no Western schooling. Like LPE, many Interior English speakers do not make a gender distinction in their use of pronouns. On the other hand, Interior English speakers differ from LPE speakers in that most of the former use the -ing form of a verb extensively. (As a rule, LPE speakers use only the main (uninflected) form of a verb.) The -ing form (the "progressive" form) indicates that an action is in progress or that a state exists:

The pekin crying.	'The child is crying.'
He making one hundred dollar for moon.	'He makes one hundred dollars a month.'

In LPE, this would be expressed by using de plus the main verb:

The pekin de cry.

He de make one hundred dollar for moon.

(While Interior English speakers use the -ing form most of the time, many of them use de at times as well.)

An Interior English characteristic is the indication of past tense by the placement of was before the main verb:*

I was not know.	'I didn't know.'
That's the place she was keep the money.	'That's where she kept the money.'

This use of was occurs frequently in Interior English but only infrequently in other varieties of Liberian English. While it is used more often with stative verbs (verbs which express a state rather than an event), it can also be used with action verbs:

I was fall down yesterday.

My auntie was die last year.

With regard to copulas, the Interior English system can be said to be standard-like in orientation: the three types of copular construction use, for the most part, the same copular form, the appropriate form of be. With each of the three constructions, there is in Interior English varia-

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*Most Interior English speakers (and many speakers of other varieties of Liberian English) apparently do not distinguish between was and were, pronouncing both wə.

tion between ø (no copula) and the appropriate form of be, e.g.

Equational: That my choice. / That's my choice.

Locational: He to the schoolhouse. / He's to the schoolhouse.

Attributive: He mean like hell. / He's mean like hell.

At the same time, there is a non-standard copula, sor, which is sometimes used in equational constructions:

He sor my friend.	'He's my friend.'
You sor woman!	'You're quite a woman!'

(sor is also used in less standard-like Settler English.)

Vernacular Liberian English. Vernacular Liberian English is the variety of Liberian English spoken by those with some Western schooling and by those who have grown up speaking English, especially those who live in or near Monrovia. As noted, Vernacular Liberian English is somewhat more standard-like than Interior English. Thus, speakers of this variety generally observe gender distinction in pronouns and only infrequently place was before the main verb to mark the past. At the same time, Vernacular Liberian English uses such non-standard auxiliaries as na, fini, and dor. The first two correspond to Standard English have (and indicate completion):

Miatta na steal my book.	'Miatta has stolen my book.'
Foday fini drink/drinking the pepper soup.	'Foday has drunk the pepper soup.'

(The use of the -ing form of the main verb with fini is a feature of more standard-like speech.)

dor indicates habitual action:

I dor eat four time in the day.	'I eat four times a day.'
If you ain't do no bad, then God dor take care of you.	'If you don't do anything bad, then God will take care of you.'

dor is, for the most part, a Vernacular Liberian and Settler English form. Speakers further down the continuum and further up it use can instead to indicate habit.

Like that of Interior English, the Vernacular Liberian English copula system consists of the appropriate form of be in variation with ø (no copula). As a rule, the more standard-like the speech, the more likely

it is that an overt copula will be present.

Settler English. Occupying something of a special place within the spectrum of Liberian English is Settler English, the speech of the Settler ethnic group. At its least standard-like, Settler English shares certain features with Interior English and, even, LPE to the exclusion of Vernacular Liberian English (as, for example, in the use of the progressive marker, de); for the most part, however, it either shares features with Vernacular Liberian English or displays parallel features. An example of this relationship between Vernacular Liberian English and Settler English is the system of marking completion: as noted above, Vernacular Liberian English uses na and fini:*

The kerosene na waste on the rice. 'The kerosene has spilled on the rice.'

The kerosene fini waste/wasting on the rice.

In Settler English, while na and fini do occur, done is the usual completive marker.

The kerosene done waste on the rice.

Liberian Standard English. Hancock characterizes the Liberian variety of Standard English by saying that it

> *. . .is employed in broadcasting and in other official capacities . . .It differs little from other varieties of Standard English spoken elsewhere in West Africa but has a distinctive phonology demonstrating considerable influence from American English.*[2]

("Phonology" refers to patterns of pronunciation.)

The warning bears repeating that this differentiation of Liberian English into five varieties is a tentative one. It may well be an oversimplification to characterize Interior English as a single entity, for that implies that all the non-LPE-speaking, non-Western-educated people who live outside Monrovia speak a single variety of English. Regional features within Interior English certainly exist. The as-yet-unanswered question is whether sufficient unity is to be found in Interior English as it is spoken in various parts of the country to outweigh the variation from region to region. Similar questions must be answered about Vernacular Liberian English and Settler English as well.

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*The correspondence between Settler English and Vernacular Liberian English, on the one hand, and Standard English, on the other, is not always neat. In some contexts, the sentences given above (with na, fini, and done) would be better expressed in Standard English by 'The kerosene had spilled on the rice,' and in still other contexts by 'The kerosene spilled on the rice.'

FOOTNOTES

[1] Hancock, Ian F, "Some Aspects of English in Liberia," p. 210

[2] Hancock, ibid, p. 207.

-----CHAPTER 3: THE PRONUNCIATION OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH-----

The discussion of the pronunciation patterns of Liberian English is divided into the following three parts: consonants, consonant deletion, and vowels. At the end of the chapter, there is an additional section on the pronunciation of negative auxiliaries. Several listening exercises are found within the chapter. To do these, it is necessary to use the cassette which accompanies this book.

The following symbols are used throughout (the examples are all taken from General American English):*

i	heart			u	who
I	hit			U	hood
e	hay	ʌ	hut	o	hoe
ɛ	head	ə	ago		
æ	hat	a	cot	ɔ	caught
ay	hide	aw	how	ɔy	boy
š	shoe			c	chat
ž	measure			j	just

The phonetic spelling of a word, i.e., the pronunciation, will be given in brackets, e.g.

shoe [šu]

1. THE CONSONANTS OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH

The set of consonants found in Liberian English is virtually identical to that found in American English.

stops	p		t		k	kp
	b		d		g	gb
fricatives		f	s	š		
		v	z	ž		
affricates				c		
				j		
nasals	m		n	ny	ŋ	
liquids			l,r			
semivowels	w			y		

*The vowels i, e, u, and o are shorter in Liberian English than in General American English. The difference is taken up in Section Three.

This set differs from the set of American English consonants in the following ways:

1) Neither the th (ð) of the nor the th (θ) of thing is present. These sounds are discussed below.

2) The labiovelar stops, kp and gb, are present. They are found primarily in words borrowed from African languages, e.g.

gbasa jamba	'cassava leaf'	(from Vai)
kpiti	'fists'	(from Kru)

(One known exception to the rule that these words are borrowed from African languages is gbo ye, the call of street vendors who sell boiled eggs. It is from English boiled egg.)

3) The palatal nasal, ny, is also present. This sound is discussed below.

The pronunciation of most of the consonants in the set of Liberian English consonants is identical to the pronunciation of their American English counterparts--or nearly so. Among the exceptions to this are the affricates, c and j. An affricate is a complex sound consisting of a stop plus a fricative; c is sometimes written phonetically as tš, a reflection of its components. When the affricate occurs at the beginning of a word, the š part of the affricate is much less prominent in Liberian English than in American English. That is, there is less of a "shush" at the end of the sound.* (The pronunciation of non-word-initial affricates is discussed in the treatment of consonant deletion below.)

Given the basic consonant set, a number of qualifying statements can be made about it, particularly with regard to the pronunciation patterns of one part or another of the Liberian English continuum.

1) th. There are two th's in American English, the th (ð) of them and the th of (θ) of thing; the two are voiced and voiceless, respectively. Some speakers of Liberian Standard English and--to a lesser extent--Vernacular Liberian English and Settler English pronounce them as they are pronounced in American English: this is particularly true with the second one, the th (θ) of thing, when it occurs at the beginning of a word. The remainder of Liberian speakers of English pronounce them in the following way:

the th (ð) of them: This sound is pronounced d when it comes at the beginning of the word and v when it comes elsewhere in the word.

those	[doz]	the	[də]/[de]
breathe	[briv]	bathe	[bev]
breathing	[brivẽ]	bathing	[bevẽ]

*For some speakers, c is pronounced ty and j as dy.

the th (θ) of thing: This sound is pronounced t when it comes at the beginning of a syllable. There is variation among speakers as to whether a syllable-final th (θ) is pronounced f or t. As a general rule, speakers pronounce it as f; the exceptions are certain words in which the preceding vowel is i or e:

thought	[tɔt]	thin	[tĕ]
throw	[trɑ]	mouth	[mawf]
wreath	[rif]	Ruth	[ruf]
teeth	[tit]	faith	[fet]

2) s/š and l/r. Indigenous Liberian languages do not contain a contrast between s and š or between l and r. Standard English, on the other hand, does: for example, suit vs. shoot, load vs. road. Because their first language does not have these contrasts, some non-native speakers of Liberian English do not distinguish between s and š, and some do not distinguish between l and r.

suit	[sut]/[šut]	load	[lod]/[rod]
shoot	[šut]/[sut]	road	[rod]/[lod]

With regard to these consonants: using the non-standard alternant is highly stigmatized, particularly where l or r is involved, for example, [lod] for road.*

3) ny. The palatal nasal consonant, ny, does appear in some American English words--canyon and onion, for example--but it only appears word-medially. On the other hand, ny can appear word-initially in Liberian English. The usual source for Liberian English words beginning with

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*With regard to l and r, not all uses of the non-standard alternant, i.e. using l for r or r for l, are equally stigmatized. Saying [los] for roast is more highly stigmatized than saying [plablĕ] for problem. That is, the most highly stigmatized environment for an l/r switch is at the beginning of the word, and the least is as the final constituent of a consonant cluster.

There are also a number of regional variants in pronunciation which can be traced directly to the pronunciation patterns of the predominant indigenous language of the area. For example, Kru and some related languages do not have word-initial l. Some speakers of LPE and Interior English substitute d for l in this position, e.g. 'Lofa' [dofa]. Also, Mano and Gio do not have c or j. Some speakers of these languages substitute s or š for c, and z for j when speaking English, e.g. 'chicken' [sekĕ], 'chair' [seə], and 'James' [zẽẽz].

ny in Standard English words beginning with y, for example:

use	[nyus]	young	[nyɔ̃]

In Liberian Standard English, Settler English, and--for some speakers--Vernacular Liberian English, y, rather than ny, is used for these words. Moreover, most words beginning with y in American English also begin with y (and not ny) in all varieties of Liberian English: you, yes, yesterday, and so forth.

In addition to words of the type cited above, there are words which begin with ny which are not of English origin; presumably, they come from African languages.

nyama-nyama	[nyama-nyama]	'trifling; small items'
nyaa	[nyaa]	part of the expression, take it nyaa, 'to shoplift'

Turn to the first Listening Exercise on page 47.

1.1 The Pronunciation of Intervocalic Consonants

A number of consonant changes can take place when a consonant occurs intervocalically, i.e. between vowels. (Very often, if the syllable following the consonant is stressed, these changes are blocked.) The changes which occur the most frequently are the following:

v becomes b or w:

never	[nɛba]/[nɛwa]
seven	[sɛbɛ̃]/[sɛwɛ̃]

b becomes w:

rubber	[rɔwa]
table	[tewɔ]

g becomes k:

bringing	[brɛ̃kɛ̃]	begging	[bɛkɛ̃]

d, t, and th (ð) become l:

headache	[helek]	old lady	[olele]
putting	[pulɛ̃]	daughter	[dala]
father	[fala]	other	[ʌla]/[ala]

Grammatical markers--such as the determiners and demonstratives the, this, that, these, those and the auxiliaries de and dor--are often pronounced with l:*

I dor see the boy all the time. [ay lɔ si bɔy ɔɔ le tã]

Also, when a word ending with t or d is followed by a word beginning with a vowel: the t may be pronounced as t, d or l; the d may be pronounced as d or l.

hit on	[hetɜ̃]/[hedɜ̃]/[helɜ̃]	need us	[nidɔ]/[nilɔ]
beat it	[bite]/[bide]/[bile]	read it	[ride]/[rile]

The change of d to l reflects the fact that many Liberian languages do not have a contrast intervocalically between d and l. Some of the changes--v to b or w, and g to k--perhaps reflect the influence of Kru (Klao) and related languages: Kru itself, for example, does not have v or g (or intervocalic d). However, these changes are no longer limited to the English of those for whom a Kru language is the first language

Turn to the second Listening Exercise on page 49.

2. CONSONANT DELETION

Perhaps the single most distinctive feature--to a non-Liberian--of Liberian English is the extent to which consonants are deleted. While consonant deletion is indeed widespread, it is not absolute, even for word-final consonants. There are principles which predict which conditions favor deletion and which conditions impede it. Also, very often, even though a consonant is not present, a "trace" is left behind to indicate that one had been there.

2.1 The Environment for Consonant Deletion

Before discussing the various types of deletion in detail, it is useful to look at the environments in which delection can occur. The usual environment is post-vocalic, i.e. immediately after a vowel, e.g.

stop	[sta]	take	[te]
good	[gu]	put	[pu]

This generalization holds so long as the post-vocalic consonant is not

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*de marks an action which is in progress; dor indicates habitual or repeated action. The former is a feature of Liberian Pidgin and Settler English; the latter is a feature of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English.

followed in turn by another vowel; that is, it holds so long as the post-vocalic consonant is not inter-vocalic. When the post-vocalic consonant is also inter-vocalic, then deletion does not occur:

stopping [stapĕ] taking [tekĕ]

For the present purposes, it is useful to exclude inter-vocalic consonants from the class of post-vocalic consonants. In the discussion which follows, "post-vocalic" will mean "immediately following a vowel but not immediately followed by one." Two consonants which come immediately after a vowel but which are not immediately followed by another vowel will both be considered post-vocalic consonants, e.g. fist.

A further refinement is needed: when the post-vocalic consonant comes at the very end of the word and the next word begins with a vowel, then deletion is frequently blocked here, too. This is especially true if the next word is a pronoun, e.g.

stop it [stape] take us [tekɔ]

Thus, what generalizations are made regarding the deletability of post-vocalic consonants will not apply--or will not apply totally--to cases of the type represented by stop it [stape].

2.2 Types of Consonants and Consonant Deletion

For purposes of exposition, consonant deletion has been classified in the following way:

Post-Vocalic Consonants
- Deletion of a Nasal Consonant
- Deletion of a Single Non-nasal Consonant

Simplification of Consonant Clusters

2.2.1 The Deletion of Post-Vocalic Nasal Consonants

The vowels of General American English are nasalized when they precede or follow a nasal consonant; however, it is only rarely the case that the nasalization of the vowel is the only indicator of nasality in the word. (This can happen when a nasal consonant drops out in fast speech in a word such as can't, yielding [kæ̃t].)

On the other hand, in Liberian English--as well as in all indigenous Liberian languages, French, and many other languages--a vowel can be nasalized even when no nasal consonant is present.* Indeed, in

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*Generally, what has happened in these languages is that a nasal consonant used to be present, but, once the vowel took over the nasality of the consonant, the consonant disappeared.

Liberian English, this is what happens most of the time. That is, when a nasal consonant occurs immediately after a vowel, the vowel becomes nasalized and the consonant is deleted, as the following examples illustrate:

long	[lɔ̃]	pen	[pɛ̃]
gun	[gə̃]/[gɔ̃]	dream	[drĩ]

Note that, as a result of the deletion, contrasts between words exist which depend solely upon whether or not the vowel is nasalized, e.g.

tune	[tũ]	vs.	too	[tu]
bean	[bĩ]	vs.	bee	[bi]

The deletion of post-vocalic nasal consonants (following the nasalization of the preceding vowel) is widespread in Liberian English, even among speakers of Liberian Standard English. It occurs much less frequently with ng (ŋ) than with the other nasal consonants: it occurs often with m and almost always with n.*

Turn to the third Listening Exercise on page 51.

2.2.2 The Deletion of a Single Consonant

(In the present section, "consonant" excludes nasal consonants and r, w, and y. The latter three sounds are discussed with vowels in Section Three.)

When a single consonant occurs post-vocalically, it is subject to deletion, e.g.

hot	[ha]	like	[lay]
need	[ni]	get	[gɛ]

Very often, however, the deletion is accompanied by the lengthening of

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*For some speakers, deletion of post-vocalic ng (ŋ) occurs primarily when it is a part of the -ing suffix, occurring only rarely with other words:

fighting	[fwaytĕ]	talking	[tɔkĕ]
bring	[brĕŋ]	strong	[strɔ̃ŋ]

On the other hand, other speakers pronounce -ing as -eŋ, but they also pronounce other unstressed word-final nasal syllables as -eŋ, e.g.

fighting	[fwaytĕŋ]	kitchen	[kešĕŋ]
button	[bɔtĕŋ]		

This latter tendency can be noted most often in more standard-like Vernacular Liberian and Settler English.

the preceding vowel, as in the following examples:

need	[nii]	pet	[pɛɛ]
toad	[too]	fish	[fii]

One way of looking at this process is to say that the lengthening of the vowel "compensates" for the loss of the consonant. Pɛt has three segments (or three units of length); so does pɛɛ.

Two of the factors which affect the extent to which a consonant is likely to undergo deletion are the following:

1. A stop (p, b, t, d, k, g) is more likely to undergo deletion than a fricative (f, v, s, z, š, ž). Thus, all other things being equal, the final consonant in let is more likely to undergo deletion than the final consonant in less.

2. The final consonant of a frequently occurring word is more likely to undergo deletion than the final consonant of an infrequently occurring word: the final consonant of rogue ('thief') is more likely to undergo deletion than the final consonant of robe.

Word-internal intervocalic consonants and, much more commonly, word-final consonants followed by a vowel (in the next word) are sometimes pronounced as a glottal stop, [ʔ]. This sound is produced by momentarily closing the glottis completely. It is heard in the Cockney pronunciation of bottle. In American English, it is used when people say "no" by saying huhh-uhh [hʌ̃ʔʌ̃]. That is, it is what comes between the first and second syllable.

Apparently, the three voiceless stops--p, t, k--are the consonants which undergo this change most often:

stop it	[staʔe]
cut it	[kɔʔe]
take it	[teʔe]

Post-vocalic l is rarely pronounced as l. It almost always undergoes deletion. Often, it triggers the compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel.

wall	[waa]/[wa]	call	[ka]/[kaa]
steal	[stii]/[sti]	will	[we]

For words which--in American English--end in a "reduced" vowel, [ə], followed by l, the vowel becomes o and the consonant is drooped:

April [epɾɔ] able [ebɔ]/[ewɔ]

Bible [baybɔ]/[baywɔ]

Turn to the fourth Listening Exercise on page 53.

2.2.3 Simplification of Consonant Clusters

Indigenous Liberian languages have strong restrictions as to when successive consonants (clusters) may occur and which consonants may be used. Those languages which permit clusters at all ordinarily restrict them in the following ways:

1. They occur only at the beginning of a syllable.

2. The second constituent can only be r, l, m, n, or b.*

Most syllable-initial clusters in American English have r, l, m, or n as the second element and, therefore, parallel those found in Liberian languages. The ones which do not have a parallel in indigenous Liberian languages are sk, sp, and st. When one of these clusters occur in Liberian English, it is sometimes broken up by the insertion of a vowel:

school [suku]

More often, the s is dropped:

stay [te] Firestone [fayɛtõ]

scholarship [kalase]

(The deletion of syllable-initial s is the only instance of consonant deletion in Liberian English where the deleted consonant is not post-vocalic.) The insertion of a vowel to break up an initial cluster (as in school [suku]) and--to a lesser extent--the deletion of an initial s (as in stay [te]) are stigmatized; the former, especially, is confined to speakers of LPE and Interior English.

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*It can be argued that the Kru languages are the only indigenous Liberian languages with true consonant clusters. In the Mande languages, there is a vowel between any two consonants; however, in many cases, the vowel is so reduced in length and quality as to be virtually imperceptible. (The spelling of the proper names Flomo and Kroma attests to this.)

The prenasalized stops found in some indigenous Liberian languages--mb, nd, and so forth--are ordinarily analyzed as being single consonants.

As noted above, some indigenous Liberian languages display syllable-initial clusters, many of them virtually identical to those of English. In sharp contrast, there are no syllable-final (post-vocalic) clusters in any indigenous Liberian language. Rather, indigenous Liberian languages favor open syllables, syllables in which the final segment is a vowel. Only a few indigenous Liberian languages permit any syllable-final consonant and those which do permit a single nasal consonant and nothing else. Thus, no syllable-final clusters are possible. In contrast, American English has a profusion of these clusters. Some examples are the following:

ps	tops	[taps]	bz	jobs	[jabz]
pt	rapt	[ræpt]	bd	mobbed	[mabd]
sp	wasp	[wasp]	st	waist	[west]
sk	ask	[æsk]			

With regard to the Liberian English pronunciation of these post-vocalic clusters, several tendencies can be noted.

1. sk does not occur in Liberian English. It becomes ks or s, e.g.

ask [æks]/[æs] desk [dɛks]/[dɛs]

([æks] is also the Black American English Vernacular pronunciation of ask.)

2. When a cluster consists of a stop (p, t, k, b, d, g) and a fricative (f, s, š, v, z, ž) in either order, the stop is more likely than the fricative to be deleted, e.g.

fox [fas] (but also [faa], [fa], and [fak])

waste [wes] (but also [wee], [we], [weet], and [wet])

past [pæs] (but also [pæ])

3. When l is the first member of a post-vocalic cluster, it is deleted. (Sometimes the second member is deleted as well.)

self [sɛf]/[sɛ] help [hɛp]

4. pt, bd, kt, and gd do not ordinarily occur in Liberian English. That is, no cluster consisting of two non-nasal stops is permitted. Instead, the second consonant is dropped. e.g.

attempt [atɛ̃p] react [riæk]

Thus, the pronunciation of the present and past tense forms of verbs ending in p, b, k, and g is identical, e.g.

	Present	Past
hop	[hap]	[hap]
rob	[rɔb]	[rɔb]
bake	[bek]	[bek]
beg	[beg]	[beg]

As in the case of a single post-vocalic cluster, the deletion of the first member of a post-vocalic cluster often triggers the lengthening of the preceding vowel as "compensation."

vex [vɛɛs] (but also [vɛs], [vɛɛ], and [vɛ])

walls [waas] (but also [was])

child [caayd] (but also [caay])

Both members of a cluster can undergo deletion. Here, too, the lengthening of the preceding vowel frequently occurs.

wild [waay] (but also [waayd])

last [lææ] (but also [læs])

As noted above, c and j are complex sounds, each consisting of a stop and a fricative. When c or j occurs in a post-vocalic environment, it behaves like a cluster in that the stop-portion of the affricate is subject to deletion.*

reach [riš] (but also [rii] and [ri])

teach [tiš] (but also [tii] and [ti])

edge [ɛž] (but also [ɛɛ])

Turn to the fifth Listening Exercise on page 55 and then to the Written Exercise on page 59.

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*In some indigenous Liberian languages, there is no contrast between j and y. In the Liberian English of a small number of speakers, j is sometimes used in place of y and vice versa. For a much larger number of speakers, there is a single instance of j/y interaction: both mayor and major, 'an army officer,' are pronounced [mežə] or [meyə]. (Pronunciation of the final vowel in both words as [a] is also common.)

2.3 Summary

To summarize the principles of consonant deletion in Liberian English:

Almost all consonant deletion occurs post-vocalically. The only exception is word-initial s in words like stay and strong. The latter type of deletion is stigmatized and is only found commonly in LPE and Interior English.

Post-vocalic nasal consonants are very often deleted. The nasality remains as a feature of the preceding vowel. n is the most likely nasal consonant to undergo deletion, and ng (ŋ) is the least likely.

Non-nasal post-vocalic consonants are also subject to deletion. However, if the next word begins with a vowel (particularly if the next word is a pronoun), deletion is inhibited. Also, when a consonant does undergo deletion, this deletion is frequently compensated for by the lengthening of the previous vowel. Stops are more likely than fricatives to undergo deletion.

When a consonant cluster is post-vocalic, one or more of its constituents is subject to deletion. When the cluster consists of a stop and a fricative, the stop is more likely to be deleted than the fricative. Clusters of two stops do not occur. As with the deletion of single consonants, the deletion of one or more consonants in a cluster frequently triggers the compensatory lengthening of the previous vowel.

The deletion of post-vocalic consonants is a feature of all varieties of Liberian speech; however, it occurs less frequently in Liberian Standard English and Settler English than in other varieties.

3. THE VOWELS OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH

As a way of approaching the vowels of Liberian English, it is helpful to consider and compare the vowels of indigenous Liberian languages and those of American English. Most indigenous Liberian languages have the seven-vowel system common throughout West Africa:*

Front	Central	Back	
i		u	High
e		o	
ɛ	a	ɔ	Low

*The exceptions are Kru, Krahn, Grebo, and Gio. The former three have nine vowels, forming an additional front vowel and an additional back vowel by retracting the root of the tongue while constricting the pharnyx. Gio has ten vowels, the three additional ones being central vowels of differing tongue height.

General American English (the speech, for example, of most radio and television newscasters) can be said to have twelve vowels. They are the following:

Front	Central	Back	
i		u	High
I		U	
e	ʌ,ə	o	
ɛ			
æ	ä	ɔ	Low

Examples of the American vowels are the following:

i	beet		u	boo
I	bit		U	book
e	bait	ə because	o	beau
ɛ	bet	ʌ but		
æ	bat	a botfly	ɔ	bought

(Not all speakers of American English have all the vowels listed here. If you do not, check with someone who does. For example, not all speakers of American English have a contrast between a and ɔ. Those who do not have it pronounce cot and caught the same way.)

In addition to the vowels listed above, American English has three diphthongs:

ay	buy
aw	bough
ɔy	boy

Diphthongs are present in indigenous Liberian languages, too--the av as in Vai is widespread--but they are not used as extensively as they are in American English.

Strictly speaking, four of the twelve American English vowels listed in the chart are also diphthongs:

i	[iy]	u	[uw]
e	[ey]	o	[ow]

These, with the ay of buy, are the vowels which American children are

taught to call "long" vowels. An American speaker assigns greater length to these four vowels than does, say, a speaker of French, Spanish, Bandi, or Krahn to the corresponding vowels in his or her language.

It is possible to establish some general correspondences between American English and Liberian English vowels. The correspondences represent tendencies rather than laws, and there are exceptions to every one of them. It should be remembered that the English speakers whom Liberians first came in contact with were not speakers of General American English. Rather, they were speakers of British dialects of English (generally, non-standard dialects of British English). The first Settlers, too, spoke a Southern, rather than a general, form of American English Also, it must be noted that there is extensive variation among Liberians as to how they pronounce words and even as to which vowels comprise their vowel-systems. There is a continuum ranging from those who use only the vowels of their first language to those who use all the vowels of American English.

3.1 The Weakening of Diphthongs

In Liberian English, the second element of a diphthong is weaker than the corresponding element in an American English diphthong. In Liberian Standard English, it is true, both components of the diphthong are usually present, but even here the second element is ordinarily weaker than in General American English. Moreover, in non-standard Liberian speech, it is common for the second component to be entirely absent, e.g.

	tie	boy	now
Liberian Standard English:	tay	bɔy	now
Other varieties:	ta	bɔ	na

Between these two extremes-the distinct pronunciation of the second element and its total disappearance--are two intermediate stages: one in which the second element is present but minimally so,

ta^{y}	$bɔ^{y}$	na^{w}

and another in which the second element is absent but the first element has been lengthened in order to "compensate" for the loss of the second element,

taa	bɔɔ	naa

The reduction and elimination of the second element is especially prevalent among words containing ay. It is noteworthy that the tendency to reduce the second element of ay also characterizes Southern American English.

This same shortening of diphthongs from, for example, ay to a also affects the vowels e (ey), i (iy), o (ow), and u (uw), which, as noted

above, are diphthongs, too. Thus, the Liberian English pronunciation of these vowels is shorter than the American English pronunciation of them.

3.2 Vowel Mergers

Because Liberian English shortens e (ey) and i (iy), these vowels are no different in length from the I of kick (a vowel which American children are taught to think of as "short"). With this part of the contrast gone, the three-way distinctiveness of these American English vowels becomes two-way throughout most of the Liberian English continuum. As a result, I is sometimes pronounced as i, so that pick and peak are homophones. More often, though, I and e are pronounced the same way, with [we] and way becoming homophones. For most speakers, the vowel which results from the I-e merger is somewhere between the two.

Some examples of words containing I in American English and their usual Liberian English pronunciation are the following:

big	[bi]	pig	[pig]
give	[gev]	still	[ste]
hit	[het]	whip	[wep]

Christian [kristyã]/[krestyã]

U, the back counterpart of I, has, for many speakers, merged with u, for example:

good	[gud]/[gu]
put	[put]/[pu]
book	[buk]/[bu]

There are other vowel mergers as well. The American English vowel æ is not a part of the seven-vowel system of indigenous Liberian languages. For many speakers (though not so many as have merged I with nearby vowels or U with u), the pronunciation of æ is either identical to that of a or, at the least, very similar to it. That is, æ is pronounced further back in the mouth than American English æ, for example:

that	[da]
pass	[pas]

Sometimes, rather than sounding like a, æ is pronounced like ɛ, especially when the vowel is nasalized:

bag	[bɛg]
band	[bɛ̃]
can	[kɛ̃]/[kyɛ̃]

bed [be]

head [he]

Thus, the General American English contrast between, for example, bed and bet is paralleled by a Liberian English contrast--even when the words have undergone final-consonant deletion,

bed [be]

bet [bɛ]

A second process at work on some Liberian words is palatalization, the insertion of a y just before a vowel. This process is a feature of all types of Liberian English. For palatalization to take place, ɛ, æ, or--sometimes--a must be preceded by k, c, or--less frequently--g:*

care [kyɛ]

chair [cyɛ]

cap [kyap]

cat [kyæt]

3.4 The Pronunciation of Nasalized Vowels

Most indigenous Liberian languages have two fewer nasalized vowels than non-nasalized ones: as in many other West African languages, ẽ and õ are missing. This characterization holds true for most speakers of LPE and Interior English. On the other hand, most speakers of Vernacular Liberian, Settler, and Liberian Standard English have these vowels; however, they are higher than their non-nasalized counterparts, e and o. ("Higher" is here in reference to the relative height of the highest part of the tongue when a given vowel is pronounced.) Thus, õ, while distinct from ũ, sounds more like it than o does like u.

3.5 The Pronunciation of Post-Vocalic r

Liberian English is what linguists call an "r-less" dialect. That

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*A phenomenon restricted to more standard-like speakers of Settler and Monrovia Vernacular Liberian English is a central offglide, an extremely short central vowel coming after the main vowel of the syllable. This occurs most frequently when the main vowel is a low front vowel, ɛ or æ:

bad [beʌd]

man [mæ̃ʌ̃]/[mɛ̃ʌ̃]

is, in words like car, work, hurt, and bird, the r is not pronounced as r. Southern American English, New York City English, most varieties of New England English, and many varieties of British English are "r-less," too. (General American English, on the other hand, is "r-ful.")

Perhaps nowhere else in the Liberian pronunciation of English is there so much variation from word to word and speaker to speaker as there is in the pronunciation of words containing post-vocalic r's. As a general rule, however, this r is replaced by a low vowel, usually ɛ or a. Which of these vowels it is depends in part on what vowel immediately precedes the r. If it is i or ɛ, r usually becomes ɛ.

	General American	Liberian
deer	[diyr]	[diɛ]
there	[ðɛr]	[dɛɛ]/[dɛ]

If it is u or a, r becomes a,

sure	[šuwr]	[šua]
car	[kar]	[kaa]/[ka]

If it is ɔ, r becomes ɔ or a,

or	[ɔr]	[ɔɔ]/[ɔa]/[ɔ]

Note that when the vowel corresponding to r is identical to the preceding vowel, as in there [dɛɛ], car [kaa], and or [ɔɔ], the resulting vowel is sometimes shortened, yielding [dɛ], [ka], and [ɔ], respectively.

Speakers differ as to which vowel they select to replace an r which follows a diphthong in words like fire and hour. For speakers of LPE and Interior English, it most often becomes a. For speakers of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, it becomes ə, ɛ, or a. (For some speakers, when the diphthong ends in w, the r most often becomes ɛ. For other speakers, whatever the diphthong, r most often becomes ə).

	General American	LPE and Interior	Settler and Vernacular
fire	[fayr]	[faya]	[fayɛ]/[fayə]/[faya]
hour	[awr]	[awa]	[awə]/[awa]/[awɛ]

Still to be considered is what happens to r when it follows a central vowel, as in words like burn and bird (where the vowel is stressed) and words like teacher and better (where the vowel in question is unstressed). The Liberian English counterpart of ʌr (the stressed central vowel followed by r) varies greatly from speaker to speaker. A partial list of the occurring pronunciations of burn and bird is the following:

	General American	Liberian
burn	[bʌrn]	[bɐ̃ɐ̃]/[bɐ̃ɪ̃]/[bɐ̃ɔ̃]
burn	[bʌrd]	[bʌʌd]/[bʌid]/[bʌɔd]

The pronunciation of an unstressed (reduced) central vowel followed by r shows less of a range. As a general rule, speakers of LPE and Interior English pronounce the r as a, and speakers of Settler, Vernacular Liberian, and Liberian Standard pronounce the r as ə:

	General American	LPE and Interior	Other Liberian Varieties
maker	[meykər]	[meka]	[mekə]
farmer	[farmər]	[fama]	[famə]

These generalizations concerning r apply to words which, in General American English, would be pronounced with r. They do not apply to words which, while spelled with a post-vocalic r, are Liberian in origin. Liberian orthography generally represents [ɔ] as or or oh, [ɛ] as er or eh, and [a] as ar or ah. In none of these cases should the r be pronounced.

Zorzor	[zɔzɔ]
Sackor	[sakɔ]
dor	[dɔ]/[lɔ]/[la]
Kerkula	[kɛkula]
Gbarnga	[gbaŋa]
Juarzon	[juazõ]

Turn to the sixth Listening Exercise on page 61.

4. THE PRONUNCIATION OF NEGATIVE AUXILIARIES

The following negative auxiliaries show up in part or all of the Liberian English continuum:

no	don't
never	ain't
not	can't

The pronunciation of four of these--not, don't, ain't, and can't--is potentially a source of confusion for someone not used to hearing Liberian English.

A distinguishing characteristic of all the negative auxiliaries is that they are pronounced with a raised pitch. Sometimes the pitch is a high level tone, and other times it is a rising tone, starting at a lower level and ending at a high pitch. In either case, the endpoint is raised. (The presence of a negative auxiliary can affect the pitch contour of the rest of the sentence as well, but--whether or not this occurs--the negative auxiliary itself will be raised in pitch.)

not. not is usually pronounced [ná]. Its uses fall into two categories: for most speakers of Vernacular Liberian English and Settler English, its use is largely confined to those instances where it would be used in Standard English, i.e. before an -ing form and/or after a modal, another auxiliary, or a copula:

He nót doing it.

You must nót bring it to me.

We will nót do it again.

I was nót the loser.

For some other speakers, particularly those who are speakers of Interior English, not is the primary negative auxiliary and is not limited to those environments listed above, occurring as well in sentences like the following:*

I nót tell him that:	'I didn't tell him that.'
He nót kill the cow.	'He didn't kill the cow.'

In the latter cases, if pitch is disregarded, the potential exists for ambiguity between not and the completive marker na, as used in sentences like the following:

I na tell him that.	'I have told him that.'
He na kill the cow.	'He has killed the cow.'

(Since the completive na cannot co-occur with other auxiliaries or with the -ing form of the main verb, no possibility of ambiguity exists for sentences containing them.)

For the most part, it is probably true that there is not much of an overlap between the group of speakers who use the completive na (speakers of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English) and the group who use not as

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*Among less-standard-like Interior English speakers, the negative auxiliary is often pronounced [nó]. As in the case of [ná] and [nó], the characteristic raised pitch is present.

their primary negative auxiliary (speakers further away from Liberian Standard English). Thus, a given speaker will probably use a sentence like

[ay na tɛ hĩ da]

in only one way. But how is the hearer to know which one? The answer, of course, is by listening to pitch.

don't. don't is widely used in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English:

I dón't care.

He dón't mean business.

In don't--and in ain't and can't as well--the final t is almost always deleted: [dṍ], [ɛ̃], and [kɛ̃] (or [kyɛ́]). In addition, often the initial d of don't is deleted as well.

[hi ṍ mi besne]	'He doesn't mean business,' i.e. 'He's not serious.'
[a ṍ kyɛ]	'I don't care.'*

(In negative imperatives, the initial d is not deleted:

[dṍ se da]	'Don't say that.')

ain't. ain't is also used in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, as in the following sentences:

He aín't worth.	'He's worthless.'
He aín't dance.	'He didn't dance.'

ain't can also be used with -ing forms, but not is used more often:

He say he nót doing it.	'He refuses/refused to do it.'
He say he aín't doing it.	

These two widely used negative auxiliaries, ain't and don't, are pronounced ɛ̃ and--often--ṍ respectively. Moreover, in very fast speech, when the preceding word ends in a vowel, the negative-auxiliary vowel--while remaining nasalized--becomes a copy of the previous vowel. That is, I don't care--as well as I ain't care-- can be pronounced

[aă kyɛ]

---

*In fast speech, the second constituent of the diphthong ay is lost.

Other examples of this process are:

[hiǐ wɔf]	He ain't/don't worth.	'He's worthless.'
[yuǔ no?]	You ain't/don't know?	'Don't you know?' or 'Didn't you know?'

Regardless of the rate of speech and regardless of the extent to which the pronunciation of the auxiliary has been reduced, raised pitch remains a feature of the auxiliary.

can't. can't is used throughout the Liberian English continuum. Because the final consonant is deleted, there is the potential for ambiguity between can't and can. Again, the crucial difference between the two lies in pitch, can't having the raised pitch characteristic of negative auxiliaries. Because this difference in pitch exists, Liberian speakers rarely, if ever, confuse the two words; indeed, the difference in pitch makes them two different words.

[hi kɛ̃ sti]	He can steal.	'He steals.'
[hi kɛ́ sti]	He can't steal.	'He doesn't steal.'

Turn to the seventh Listening Exercise on page 63.

FIRST LISTENING EXERCISE

Liberian English Consonants

PART ONE

Listen to the pronunciation of these words:

gb:	gbasa jamba	th (θ):	thing
	Gbarnga		thank
	gbapleh		three
kp:	Kpelle		mouth
	Kpaku		Ruth
	kpamgba		wreath
th (ð):	that		teeth
	though	ny:	use
	those		young
	breathe		nyama-nyama
	bathe		
	bathing		
	breathing		

Notes:

gbapleh is 'a type of flat fish, frequently dried before it is sold.'

kpaku means 'small for one's size; wiry.'

kpamgba is 'a type of dried fish.'

Because of consonant deletion (discussed below), the final consonant of those is often not pronounced. It is not pronounced on the tape.

The speaker's second pronunciation of thank is [θæ̃æ̃].

PART TWO

Because th is not generally a part of Liberian speech, many words become homophones (have the same pronunciation) in Liberian English which are not homophones in American English. For example, those and does ('female deer') are homophones in Liberian English; they are pronounced [doz] (or [do]). These words are not homophones in General American English.

This exercise looks at homophones of this kind. Every item you will hear represents the pronunciation of two (or more) homophones. One of each of these pairs is written below. You are to write the other one. Each of your answers should contain a th in its spelling (and in its General American English pronunciation). The answers are given on page 65.

Examples: does *those*

true *through*

1. day _____
2. fate _____
3. tie _____
4. does _____
5. taught _____
6. die _____
7. tin _____
8. roof _____

SECOND LISTENING EXERCISE

Intervocalic Consonant Changes

PART ONE

Listen to the pronunciation of these words and sentences:

v becomes b or w (the first time, the word is pronounced with a b; the second time, it is pronounced with a w):

never palaver

b becomes w:

able Tolbert

g becomes k:

bringing beggar

d, t, and th (ð) become l:

a. Intervocalically

d: headache old lady

t: cutting matter

th: brother other

b. Word-finally when the following word begins with a vowel:

He cut it with knife.

Part it this way.

c. At the beginning of grammatical markers:

He de build the house.

I dor see the boy all the time.

PART TWO

The changes involving intervocalic consonants increase the number of homophones in the language. For example, while full and foot are--when not subject to deletion of the final consonant--pronounced differently, the -ing forms of both words can be pronounced in the same way:

He fulling it there. [hi fulɛ̃ e dɛ] 'He's filling it up there.'

He footing it there. [hi fulɛ̃ e dɛ] 'He's going there (on foot).'

There is, perhaps a parallel in General American English. While there is clearly a difference between write and ride, some people may not make a distinction in their pronunciation of writing and riding or of writer and rider.

As a result of the operation of the rules involving intervocalic consonants in Liberian English, the sentences which you will hear will each have two different meanings. In every case, one interpretation is given. See if you can provide the other. The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 65.

Example: He fulling it there. He footing it there.

1. She feeding the thing now. _____

2. That girl like begging business too much. _____

_____

3. Who that put the cotter on the dog? _____

_____

(cotter is 'a headpad used when transporting a load on one's head.')

4. He going to the cottage. _____

5. I was sinking in the water. _____

6. Pull it together. _____

THIRD LISTENING EXERCISE

Nasalization

PART ONE

Listen to each of these eight pairs of words. The difference between the first and second member of each pair is that that vowel of the second member is nasalized.

[su]	[sũ]
[bi]	[bĩ]
[tay]	[tãỹ]
[tu]	[tũ]
[lay]	[lãỹ]
[si]	[sĩ]
[vay]	[vãỹ]
[bru]	[brũ]

PART TWO

Now, one member of each of the above pairs will be repeated. Put a circle around the word which is repeated. The answers for this and the next exercise are given at the end of the chapter on page 65.

PART THREE

Every one of the words listed above is a commonly used word in Liberian English. The first member of each pair is listed below--using its standard spelling. Now, the second member of each pair--the nasalized one--will be repeated. Write it down--using standard spelling--in the space provided below. In some cases, there will be more than one possible answer.

sue _____

be _____

tie _____

two _____

lie _____

see _____

Vai _____

brew _____

FOURTH LISTENING EXERCISE

Consonant Deletion

PART ONE

Listen to these examples.

Single-consonant deletion:

house	cat
leaf	top
dog	make

l-deletion:

steal	call
will	April
wall	trouble

Glottal-stop formation:

stop it	take it
cut it	

PART TWO

Below are written several sentences. As you hear each of these sentences, underline every deleted consonant. Do not worry about r's or nasal consonants. The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 65.

Example: That foolish man abused his friend too bad.

1. We ate pepper soup with rice.
2. She said, "I like you face, I like your rig. There's just one thing wrong: Your feet's too big."
3. What place this bus will stop at?
4. This glorious land of liberty shall long be ours.
5. But what got your face looking serious like dog-killer so?

FIFTH LISTENING EXERCISE

Consonant Deletion, Continued.

The text of a folk tale is given below. Read along as the speaker on the tape narrates the tale.

WHY TURTLE'S BACK IS ROUGH

Once upon a time, (time), there were bird them and Turtle. That time was hungry time. Now Turtle was not having food, but some animal them were having party in the tree. Turtle went to the bird them. He went there, he begged the bird them to help him. The bird them agreed. They gathered their feathers and made wings for Turtle. They all went together to the feast.

So the animals who called the feast, they came. They told them, say, "Yall people must give us yall name." So the bird them fini give their names to the people. And Turtle say, "My name, that's 'All-of-Yall.'" So every day when the people bring the food, Turtle asked, say, "Who the food for?" They tell him, say, "The food's for all of yall." Turtle will hold it and eat it. Every day this thing here happened. So the bird them, they got vexed, and they took their feathers from Turtle.

There was no way for Turtle to come down. So he sent message to his wife to put soft things under the tree so that he will throw hisself down. When the bird them went to Turtle's wife, they told Turtle's wife that Turtle say, "You must bring all the old-old dishes and bottles under the tree." So when they went, Turtle's wife carried all the old-old things and put it under the tree. When Turtle throw hisself down, he break in piece. They carried him to the hospital, and they sewed him. But all his back stayed rough. That's why today Turtle's back's rough.

Notes:

Liberian English folk tales usually begin with this formula: the speaker says, "Once upon a time," and the audience answers, "Time."

When them follows a noun, it is a way of marking plurality. Thus, bird them means 'birds.'

hungry time is 'the period before the new rice crop is harvested and after the old one has been used up.'

yall is the second-person plural pronoun and possessive adjective. Here, fini give means 'gave.'

A. Listen to the folk tale again. Every time a post-vocalic nasal consonant is deleted (and the preceding vowel nasalized), underline the nasal consonant.

B. Listen to the text once more. This time, cross out every consonant which has been deleted. Do not worry about r. The answers for this and the preceding exercise are given at the end of the chapter on page 66.

C. One of the differences between Liberian languages and American English is that the former are syllable-timed while the latter is stress-timed. In a syllable-timed language, each syllable is of approximately the same duration. The exceptions are those syllables containing lengthened vowels, but it is precisely the regularity of syllable timing that makes the lengthening of a vowel a salient feature.

In a stress-timed language, the interval from stressed syllable to stressed syllable is approximately equal.

An example of syllable-timed sentences comes from Vai. (These examples have been provided by Tom Wheeler.)

Táa sàana makɛtíyɛ lɔ feŋ bɔɔ naŋ ńje, ẁoe.

M woa ii tàa saana makɛtíyɛ lɔ i gbasa jamba bɔɔ saŋ ńje, ẁoe.

The second of these sentences takes much longer to say.

In contrast, the American English equivalents to these two expressions would take about the same length of time (the under-lined words being the stressed ones):

Go to the market to buy something for me right now.

I want you to go to the market to buy some cassava leaf for me right now.

Listen to the folk tale again. As you do, keep time with your finger tapping it once for each syllable. The regularity of syllable length should become apparent.

D. Finally, say the story along with the speaker. As you do, pay special attention to the length of vowels. Also, see if you con duplicate her intonation, raising your voice when hers goes up and lowering it when hers goes down.

WRITTEN EXERCISE

The following story was told by a speaker of Liberian English. See if you can recognize all the consonants which would be subject to deletion. Underline the nasal consonants which are subject to deletion. Then cross out the non-nasal consonants which could be deleted. (Don't worry about r.) The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 67.

MY NEW BEAT

One new girl is working in my office, and I been trying to get close to her. I asked her if she had boyfriends, and she told me that she got her main boyfriend and two others, that's three altogether. So I asked her whether she could make it four.

She say, "No! I can't make it four."

So I say, "OK, but since you can't make it four, dismiss one man and put another one there."

So she say, "No, I can't just move one like that."

So I asked her in that way, you know, I say, "Oh, but if anybody want to go there, you think you can make it four?"

And she say, "No."

I say, "Dammit. But then it's rough o. I think you have to spoil that law now to make it four."

Say, "No, I ain't able with even three."

I say, "Look, man, come down and say something good, man."

Then she say, "Anyway, I will put you on probation. I will not employ you, I will put you on probation work."

I say, "OK, but nothing wrong with that." Then I told her, "But you can't dismiss?"

She say, "No. The people doing their work, so I can't fire them." It stay like that. I'm on probation now, but sometime she will employ me.

Notes:

The use of say by itself--that is, without a subject and not following another verb--signals a change of speaker.

Here, in that way, you know means 'coyly, flirtatiously.'

Sometime can mean 'perhaps.'

SIXTH LISTENING EXERCISE

Liberian English Vowels

PART ONE

The lengthening of a vowel is a clue that a consonant has been deleted. The following nonsense syllables are meant to show you the difference between a "regular" (non-lengthened) vowel and its lengthened counterpart.

bi	bii
tu	tuu
ka	kaa
ko	koo
bɛ	bɛɛ
p̃i	p̃ii
f̃u	f̃uu
c̃a	c̃aa

PART TWO

For each of the following words, tell whether the vowel in it is lengthened or not. Put a circle around the correct answer. The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 69.

Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short
Long	Short

PART THREE

The reduction of diphthongs, the merger of e and I, the alteration and deletion of post-vocalic r--all of these combine with the consonant mergers and deletions to increase the number of homophonous words. When

homophones are involved, the context usually provides information which enables the listener to figure out which of them has been used. (In those cases where the contextual clues are not sufficient, ambiguity results.)

In the following sentences, one of a pair of homophones is given. Listen carefully to the tape and then write the other homophone; that is, the one which is not in the sentence.

Because so many processes are at work, this is not an easy exercise. Try to do it. If you are stumped on any of the questions, use one or more of the following hints:

> The answer contains a post-vocalic r (in General American English): Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 6.
>
> The answer is subject to final-consonant deletion: Numbers 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 69.

Example: How far the line can go? *land*

1. He say she dead. _____
2. I must stop? _____
3. That man was cowboy before. _____
4. The cat fini eating the rice. _____
5. I hate that man too bad. _____
6. The rice too hot, man. _____
7. He stay there. _____
8. He went to see the cane. _____

SEVENTH LISTENING EXERCISE

Negative Auxiliaries

PART ONE

Section A. Listen to how sentences containing not and na are pronounced. See if you can hear the difference between the two types of sentences.

1. He not kill the cow.
2. He na kill the cow.
3. I not tell him.
4. I na tell him.

Section B. This set of sentences contains don't and ain't. Note that the d of don't is not pronounced in these sentences. As you listen to these sentences, pay special attention to the pitch.

1. But how? You don't want me again?
2. I don't go for it o.
3. You don't know?
4. He ain't got time.
5. He ain't worth.
6. I ain't dance o.

Section C. Listen to these sentences, each of them containing can't or can. Then, play them a second time and say them along with the speaker on the tape. Try to sound just like he does, especially with regard to pitch. This is a good exercise to repeat several times.

1. It can hurt.
2. It can't hurt.
3. She can teach school.
4. She can't teach school.
5. I can help you.
6. I can't help you.
7. He can speak Krahn.
8. He can't speak Krahn.

PART TWO

For each of the following sentences, you must decide whether the sentence is positive or negative. If it is negative, one of the following auxiliaries will be present: not, can't, don't, or ain't. Put a circle around your answer. The answers are given at the end of the chapter on page 69.

Section A. not/na

1.	Positive	Negative	4.	Positive	Negative
2.	Postiive	Negative	5.	Positive	Negative
3.	Positive	Negative	6.	Positive	Negative

Section B. can't/can

1.	Positive	Negative	6.	Positive	Negative
2.	Positive	Negative	7.	Positive	Negative
3.	Positive	Negative	8.	Positive	Negative
4.	Positive	Negative	9.	Positive	Negative
5.	Positive	Negative	10.	Positive	Negative

Section C.

1.	Positive	Negative	6.	Positive	Negative
2.	Positive	Negative	7.	Positive	Negative
3.	Positive	Negative	8.	Positive	Negative
4.	Positive	Negative	9.	Positive	Negative
5.	Positive	Negative	10.	Positive	Negative

Section D.

1.	Positive	Negative	6.	Positive	Negative
2.	Positive	Negative	7.	Positive	Negative
3.	Positive	Negative	8.	Positive	Negative
4.	Positive	Negative	9.	Positive	Negative
5.	Positive	Negative	10.	Positive	Negative

ANSWERS TO LISTENING EXERCISES

Exercise One, Part Two:

1. they	5. thought
2. faith	6. thy
3. thigh	7. thin
4. though	8. Ruth

Exercise Two, Part Two:

1. She feeling the thing now. (That is, 'the thing is affecting her now.')
2. The girl like baking business too much. (That is, 'she likes to bake a lot.')
3. Who that put the collar on the dog?
4. He going to the college.
5. I was singing in the water.
6. Put it together.

Exercise Three, Part Two:

[su]	[sū]
[bi]	[bɪ̄]
[tay]	[tāy]
[tu]	[tū]
[lay]	[lāy]
[si]	[sɪ̄]
[vay]	[vāy]
[ɒru]	[brū]

Exercise Three, Part Three:

soon

bean, been, beam

time, tine

tune, tomb

line, land, lime

scene, seen, seem

vine

broom

Exercise Four, Part Two:

1. We ate pepper soup with rice.
2. She said, "I like your face, I like your rig. There's just one thing wrong: your feet's too big."
3. What place this bus will stop at?
4. This glorious land of liberty shall long be ours.
5. But what got your face looking serious like dog-killer so?

Exercise Five:

Once upon a time, (time), there were birɸ them anɸ Turtɭe. Thaɬ time waɬ hungry time. Now Turtɭe waɬ noɬ havinɸ fooɸ, buɬ someɸ animaɭ them were havinɸ party in the tree. Turtɭe weɬ to the birɸ them. He weɬ there, he beggeɸ the birɸ them to heɭp him. The birɸ them agreeɸ. They gathereɸ their featherɬ anɸ maɸe wingɬ for Turtɭe. They aɭɭ weɬ together to the feaɬɬ.

So the animaɭɬ who caɭɭeɸ the feaɬɬ, they came. They toɭɸ them, say, "Yaɭɭ peopɭe muɬɬ giʋe uɬ yaɭɭ name." So the birɸ them fini giʋe their nameɬ to the peopɭe. Anɸ Turtɭe say, "My name, thaɬ'ɬ 'All of Yaɭɭ.'" So everyday when the peopɭe bring the fooɸ, Turtɭe askeɸ, say, "Who the fooɸ for?" They teɭɭ him, say, "The fooɸ'ɬ for all of yaɭɭ." Turtɭe wiɭɭ holɸ iɬ anɸ eat iɬ. Every day thiɬ thinɸ here happeneɸ. So the birɸ them, they goɬ vexeɸ, anɸ they tooɬ their featherɬ from Turtɭe.

There was no way for Turtle to come down. So he sent message to his wife to put soft things under the tree so that he will throw hisself down. When the bird them went to Turtle's wife, they told Turtle's wife that Turtle say, "You must bring all the old-old dishes and bottles under the tree." So when they went, Turtle's wife carried all the old-old things and put it under the tree. When Turtle throw hisself down, he break in piece. They carried him to the hospital, and they sewed him. But all his back stayed rough. That's why today turtle's back's rough.

Notes:

When a word-final consonant and the word-initial consonant of the next word are identical, e.g. bird them and went together, the question of deletion of the word-final consonant becomes more or less academic.

With regard to plurals marked by -s, possessives, and past tense forms marked by -d, it can be argued that these markers can't have been deleted since they were not there in the first place. Speakers of Liberian English very often do not overtly mark a noun as plural when plurality is clear from context. Similarly, they generally mark possession by word order only:

Turtle wife	'Turtle's wife'
the baby arm	'the baby's arm'

As for past-tense forms, speakers of Vernacular Liberian English tend to mark the past of verbs that are irregular but tend not to mark the past when it is formed by adding -d. (Speakers of Liberian Pidgin, Interior, and Settler English are less likely to mark any verbs for past tense.) The question of verb tense is taken up in Chapter Four.

Written Exercise:

One new girl is working in my office, and I been trying to get close to her. I asked her if she had boyfriends, and she told me that she got her main boyfriend and two others, that's three altogether. So I asked her whether she could make it four.

She say, "No! I can't make it four."

So I say, "OK, but since you can't make it four, dismiss one man and put another one there."

So she sav, "No, I can't juśt moṽe one liḱe thaṫ."

So I aśḱeḍ her in thaṫ way, you know, I say, "Oh, buṫ if anybody waṇṫ to go there, you thiṇḱ you can make iṫ four?"

Aṇḍ she say, "No."

I say, "Dammiṫ. Buṫ then iṫ's rough o. I thiṇḱ you haṽe to spoiȷ thaṫ law now to make iṫ four."

Say, "No, I ain't abȷe wiṫḤ even three."

I say, "Looḱ, maṇ, come down aṇḍ say somethiṇḍ gooḍ, maṇ."

Then she say, "Anyway, I wiȷȷ puṫ you on probation. I wiȷȷ noṫ employ you, I wiȷȷ puṫ you on probation work."

I say, "OK, buṫ nothiṇḍ wroṇḍ wiṫḤ thaṫ." Then I toȷḍ her, "Buṫ you can't diśmiśś?"

She say, "No. The peoṗȷe doiṇḍ their work, so I can't fire them." Iṫ stay liḱe thaṫ. I'm on probation now, buṫ sometime she wiȷȷ employ me.

Notes:

The underlined consonants in the following words--all of them s's--while subject to deletion, do not ordinarily undergo it:

office	dismiss
close	ask

(On the other hand, the k in ask is usually deleted.)

The t in but and not seems to undergo deletion in virtually every environment, as does the th of with.

The k of work rarely undergoes deletion.

The second p in people is often deleted, the word being pronounced a number of ways, including [piɔ] and [pɔ].

When am (or 'm) is present (as in the last sentence of the exercise), the nasal consonant usually does not undergo deletion.

Exercise Six, Part Two:

Long	tii
Short	ra
Long	pũũ
Short	si
Short	pũ
Short	ti
Long	raa
Long	sii

Exercise Six, Part Three:

1. there
2. start
3. carboy
4. rat
5. hit
6. hard
7. still
8. king

Exercise Seven, Part Two:

Section A:

1. Positive. You na do the thing right, man.
2. Negative. He not tell the whole story.
3. Positive. The kerosene na waste on the rice.
4. Negative. You not do the thing right, man.
5. Negative. The kerosene not waste on the rice.
6. Positive. He na eat the beans.

Notes: waste means 'to spill.'

Section B:

1. Negative. Marie can't sing.
2. Positive. My pa them can make farm every year.
3. Negative. The man say he can't change ten dollars.
4. Positive. Marie can sing.

5. Negative. That boy can't steal.
6. Negative. That pekin there can't eat rice.
7. Negative. My pa them can't make farm every year.
8. Positive. That boy can steal.
9. Positive. When Borbor John cook, we can enjoy the food.
10. Negative. He can't drink the way the old pa use to drink.

Notes:

In addition to being a straightforward plural marker, them also can be an associative plural marker; that is, here my pa them means 'my father and those who work with him.'

pekin means 'child.'

Section C:

1. Positive. We will see.
2. Negative. We ain't know.
3. Negative. You don't suppose to talk that one.
4. Positive. I'm Momo.
5. Negative. That cow ain't got tail.
6. Positive. I done see him the other time.
7. Positive. We know!
8. Negative. I ain't Momo.
9. Positive. He dor run behind the people's daughters.
10. Negative. They ain't finish yet.

Section D:

1. Negative. I ain't doing it.
2. Positive. He say he need the money today.
3. Negative. I don't blame you.
4. Negative. You can't say that.

5. Positive. I must talk it?

6. Positive. The soldier them carry the boy inside.

7. Negative. That ain't Martha.

8. Positive. That boy dor talk to people too some-kind-of way, man.

9. Negative. He say he ain't need the money today.

10. Positive. Drunkard and all listen when Mother Dukuly be preaching.

Notes:

too some-kind-of-way here means 'in an unsatisfactory or unpleasant manner.'

drunkard and all means 'everyone, even drunkards.'

In Sentence 10, the high pitch on all serves to emphasize the notion of 'even drunkards.' The sentence illustrates the principle that, while--as a rule--every negative auxiliary takes a high pitch, the converse does not hold: that is, every instance of high pitch does not signal a negative auxiliary.

--------CHAPTER 4: THE GRAMMAR OF LIBERIAN ENGLISH--------

This discussion of the grammar of Liberian English is meant to provide an introduction to some features of the noun phrase and the verb phrase. The orthography used for the Liberian English sentences in this chapter is that used in the second part of the book. That is, non-nasal consonants likely to undergo deletion have been underlined. Because they are more vowel-like, this convention has not been applied to r, w, or y (nor to l in unstressed final syllables as in trouble and Bible).

1. THE NOUN PHRASE

1.1 Number.

For nouns whose plural is formed by adding s or es, the noun's plurality is ordinarily not marked when one of the following conditions is met:*

a. The plurality of the noun has been established by other words within the noun phrase, e.g.

three bus

so-so bigshot 'nothing but VIP's'

those car there

b. The plurality of the noun has been established by context (that is, by words outside the noun phrase), e.g.

Saye can sell chicken egg.

Cut the meat in piece.

c. A noun's plurality is either not established or not crucial, e.g.

He fell down on the rock.

He can't eat banana.

While for all speakers of non-standard Liberian English, the plural is ordinarily not marked under these conditions, it is marked some of the time under them. The extent to which it is marked is in direct relation

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*Nouns for which one of these conditions holds are sometimes referred to by a singular pronoun.

to the place on the continuum of the speech in question: the less standard-like a person's speech, the less likely that s's will be present in these contexts.

When the noun's plural is irregular, speakers of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English are likely to mark it in these contexts, but speakers of LPE and Interior English are not.

Settler and Vernacular	Interior and LPE
three women	three woman
all (two of) my feet	all (two) my foot

When a plural is marked, it is done as it would be in Standard English or by inserting them [dɛ] after the noun (or--less frequently--by doing both):

the boys

the boy them

the boys them

As would be expected, the standard plural, i.e. -s, is used more often in more standard speech, and the non-standard plural, i.e. them, is used more often in less standard speech.

them has a second use, one shared by all speakers of Liberian English: it is an associative plural, as illustrated by the following examples:

Greet Brother Eli them.	'Greet Brother Eli and the others in his house.'
The Minister them coming tomorrow.	'The Minister and his or her entourage are coming tomorrow.'

1.2 Determiners.

The definite determiner, the, has a number of pronunciations, but which one is selected is a function of the phonological environment (the sounds immediately preceding and following it) rather than the grammatical environment. LPE speakers often place the before proper names and place names:

I meet the Flomo in the Sanniquellie.	'I met Flomo in Sanniquellie.'

As for indefinite determiners: when they are overtly marked, one is very often the singular marker, and some is usually the plural.

He sold the meat to one man.

He sold the meat to some men them.

(a and an are used as well.)

In all varieties, but especially in LPE and Interior English, the indefinite determiner is often not present in environments where Standard English would use a or an:

They kill cow yesterday.

She went to take bath.

1.3 Pronouns.

The pronominal system of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English is that of Standard English with these differences:

1) a distinction is made between second-person singular and second-person plural, between you and yall; and

2) with respect to pronominal adjectives, the following variants are all used for the second-person singular, second-person plural, and third-person plural, respectively:

2nd Sing.:	your, you
2nd Plur.:	your, yall, you, yall-people
3rd Plur.:	their, they

Some examples of these forms are the following:

They gown not like yall-people gown.	'Their gowns are not like your gowns.'
You brother o, you sister o--when you ain't got money, no one got you time.	'When you don't have money, no one--not even your brother or your sister--cares about you.'

Interior English shares with Settler and Vernacular Liberian English the non-standard pronominal features outlined above plus the following:

1) frequently, no distinction is made between masculine and feminine gender (with respect to third-person singular pronouns).* The common third-person singular subject pronouns are he and it, the former being used whether the subject is male or female. she is used infrequently and not always to refer to a female.

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*Some indigenous Liberian languages--Krahn and Grebo, for example--have different pronouns for animate and inanimate entities, but no indigenous language distinguishes between masculine and feminine in its pronominal system.

Similarly, him (or he or hĩ) and it are the usual third-person object pronouns. As for pronominal adjectives, the more standard-like speakers use his for third-person singular, while the less standard-like use hĩ.

2) the frequent use of we as an object pronoun and as a pronominal adjective is another Interior English feature, e.g.

God help we.

They fini fool we pekin them. 'They have deceived our children.'

LPE, as expected, displays still greater divergence from standard forms. In addition to the non-standard forms already noted, a number of other forms are used.

For example, the third-person singular subject pronoun is i (pronounced [i]) or he. (Some LPE speakers also use it.) The two, i and he, are variants of a single form; they do not differ in meaning, and they are generally interchangeable.

Paralleling the he/i variation among third-person singular subject pronouns is a they/e variation among third-person plural subject pronouns. (Some LPE speakers use them as a subject pronoun as well.)

LPE also uses several different third-person singular object pronouns: him, hĩ, he, and it.* it is reserved for objects which are

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*Speakers of LPE and Interior English--but many speakers of Settler and Vernacular Liberian English as well--say

Let he come. 'Let him (or her) come.'

This does not mean that he is an object pronoun for all these speakers. Rather, let can be placed before a sentence:

Let he must do the thing. 'He/she should do it.' / 'Let him/her do it.'

Let we must go. 'We should go.'

The most frequent exceptions to this generalization are first-person plural pronouns in sentences where no auxiliary or modal precedes the verb.

Let's go.

Let's push. 'Let's take our leave.'

In sentences of the latter type, because the rule which deletes final consonants is at work, the 's which represents the pronoun is usually not present.

neuter, and he and him are ordinarily reserved for masculine or feminine. On the other hand, hĭ can stand in place of nouns of any gender. hĭ also serves as an emphatic pronoun, e.g.

Hĭ tell me.	'He's the one who told me.'
i be hĭ.	'That's it!'

LPE has the following pronominal adjectives:

my	we, wea
your, you	your, yall
he, hĭ, hĭỹã	their, they

hĭỹã is restricted to the Soldier English subvariety of LPE, and wea [wiya] is heard more often in Soldier English than in Kru Pidgin English.

1.4 Possession.

In all non-standard varieties of Liberian English, possession is expressed by word order, the possessor coming before the possessed, e.g.

Pewu uncle

the baby arm

my brother wife

Frequently, speakers add own of or part of to the possessor:

Mary part of bad luck

my own of rice

her own of brother

Toe own of trouble

In addition to possession expressed within a noun phrase, there are also full sentences which express possession. The most common structure uses for:

The book is for me.

The cow for the chief.

That food not for yall.

An alternative full-sentence construction uses that and either own or part.

That my own. 'That's mine.'

That the pekin part. 'That's the child's.'

(mine, yours, and so forth are not features of non-standard Liberian English.)

1.5 Emphasis.

The Standard English demonstratives--this, that, these, and those--are used in Liberian English.

When one of the demonstratives is present, here or there is often placed after the noun; here co-occurs with this and these, and there co-occurs with that and those.

this Monrovia here

those boy there

Also, there often occurs after a noun of location, even when no demonstrative is present.

right to Education there	'right there at the Ministry of Education
just inside New Krutown there	'just inside New Krutown'

self is a widely used emphatic marker. The most satisfactory Standard English equivalent is 'even.'

The Minister self can be afraid of that woman.	'Even the Minister is afraid of that woman.'
Five dollar self small for that duck.	'Even five dollars is a small amount to pay for a duck like that.'

self, at the end of the sentence, emphasizes the entire predication:

That man never came self.	'That man never even came.'
What kind of practicing you can do self?	'What kind of practicing do you even do?'

and all is used in similar fashion. Sometimes, but not always, its use suggests that the emphasized noun is representative of some larger phenomenon.

That guy, that bigger boy for true. He got briefcase and all, my man.	'That guy has really arrived; he's got a briefcase and all the other trappings of success.'

Sumoyea and all can laugh when Wodee be singing.	'Everybody--even Sumoyea--laughs when Wodee sings.'
Look at the blouse and all coming out.	'Look at how the blouse is coming out (from the skirt).'

In Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, when the noun is animate, another type of emphatic construction is possible in which the noun is followed by a with-phrase calling attention to a body part or prominent characteristic of the noun in question:

Joe Bar with his short self.	'short Joe Bar'
you girl with your red mouth	
California people with their earthquake buying new house like hell.	'Despite all the earthquakes, California people are buying a lot of new houses.'

2. THE VERB PHRASE

The discussion of verbs which follows treats the following topics:

2.1 Tense
- 2.1.1. Past
- 2.1.2. Irrealis

2.2 Aspect
- 2.2.1. Progressive
- 2.2.2. Habitual
- 2.2.3. Completive
- 2.2.4. Hortative

2.3 Copulas

2.4 Negation

2.1 Tense

2.1.1 Past

A characteristic common to many pidginized and creolized languages is that the unmarked verb form is used for the 'simple past' of action verbs.

I tell him three time not to put his hand there.	'I warned him three different times not to get involved.'
We plant cocoa last year.	

The time of the action is established by context or by time-words such as last year.

This generalization applies to Liberian English speech to varying degrees. Speakers of Interior English and less standard-like Settler English generally do not use past-tense forms for simple-past actions. However, when they do use a past-tense form, it is ordinarily one in which the verb is irregular, i.e. go or take more often than plant or need. (Speakers of LPE do not, as a rule, use past-tense forms at all.)

On the other hand, many speakers of Vernacular Liberian English (and of Settler English) tend to mark the simple past. They don't, it is true, add [-d] to those Standard English verbs which form their past tense in that way, but that fact is explained by rules of pronunciation rather than grammar. [-d] in this environment--as a post-vocalic stop consonant--would disappear.

kill(ed)	[ke]
talk(ed)	[tɔk]
dance(d)	[dɛ̃s]

However, such speakers usually use the past-tense forms of irregular verbs. (Sometimes, however, the paradigm has been altered, and the irregular past-tense form has been dropped out. For many speakers, throw, catch, and hold are invariant, i.e.,*

He throw me the ball, and I catch it.	'He threw me the ball, and I caught it.'

And, for the most part, when a verb forms the past by adding [-əd], Vernacular Liberian English speakers add this:**

want	wanted
wait	waited
need	needed

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*By another restructuring of a paradigm, lost is the unmarked form of that verb.

Don't lost the money.

Also, as a consequence of the operation of certain rules of pronunciation, most speakers do not differentiate between give and gave (both are [ge] or [gev]) or between say and said (both are [se]).

**In a quantitative study of this phenomenon, the only frequent exception which appeared was start; that is, it was usually start in past environments, too.

Thus, it seems legitimate to say that speakers of Vernacular Liberian English do mark the simple past.

In addition to the use of the unmarked form (characteristic of LPE, Interior English, and some Settler English speech) and the use of the past-tense form (characteristic of Vernacular Liberian English and other Settler English speech), a third way exists to express simple past: place was immediately before the main verb, e.g.

He say he was go there, but he was not see Juah.	'He said he went there, but he didn't see Juah.'
He was have one Chevrolet car.	'He had a Chevrolet.'

(As noted in Chapter Two, this construction is characteristic of Interior English speech.) Sometimes, when the main verb is irregular or when the past-tense form of the verb takes [-əd], the past is doubly marked:

I was told him to go there.	'I told him to go there.'
I was wanted to come.	'I wanted to come.'

Among some speakers of Interior English, a similar form marks ongoing and habitual actions; am, is, or are is used in such instances:*

That the way we are do to our town.	'That's how we do it in our town.'
Since it government business, we are force ourself to do it.	'Since it involves the government, we force ourselves to do it.'

2.1.2. Irrealis.

Irrealis refers to actions which have not occurred. Thus, it encompasses the future and conditionals. Some Standard English irrealis sentences are the following:

He will be here tomorrow at ten.

---

*The continuum from least standard-like to most standard-like is not always straightforward. It appears to be the case that, as an Interior English speaker progresses along the continuum toward Standard English, he or she acquires first the past-tense marker was/were and places it in front of the main verb. Then, progressing further still, the speaker acquires a comparable tense marker for actions and events which are ongoing. The next step along the continuum is to stop using these markers in this way.

I wouldn't marry him if he were the last man on earth.

If Grant had been drinking at Appomattox, Birth of a Nation would have been set in Sandusky.

The unity of future sentences with conditionals is re-inforced by the fact that a single marker, go, is used by LPE speakers and some Interior English speakers for both future and conditional sentences:

I go beat you till all two you eye turn blue.	'I will beat you until your eyes turn blue.'
One like me, I go join army, my mouth go lift up.	'If I joined the army, I would prosper.'
You go agree, you no go agree, you go go.	'Whether you like it or not, you will go.'

Similarly, many speakers of Interior, Settler, and Vernacular Liberian English use will for both future and conditional.

If they make that drunkard head of state, he will carry one schnappes of cane juice down to two cent.	'If they made that drunkard the head of state, he would lower the price of cane juice to two cents for a schnappes-bottle-ful.'
You think you will like to marry that kind of dirty human being?	'Do you think you would like to marry a dirty person like that?'

Other Settler and Vernacular Liberian English speakers have roughly the will/would distinction of Standard English.

Frequently, in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English speech, be is used as a copula in if- and when-clauses:

When the rain be plenty, that the time I can stay home.	'When it rains a lot, that's when I stay home.'
If the bunch of green be big-big, sometime I will add four cup of water like that.	'If each bunch of greens is large, sometimes I add as much as four cups of water.'

Similarly, the main verb in if- and when-clauses often is replaced by be plus the progressive form of the verb:

When it be raining like that, I can't take bath.	'When it rains like that, I don't bathe.'

When that man be talking his pile of astray, I don't mind him at all.	'Whenever that man talks a lot of nonsense, I don't pay any attention to him at all.'

In addition to the irrealis markers mentioned above, most speakers use another one as well: coming, which marks the incipient future, i.e. things which are about to happen:

It coming rain.	'It's about to rain.'
I coming carry your complaint to the sergeant.	'I'm on the verge of complaining about you to the sergeant.'

When the conditional sentence refers to the past, Settler and Vernacular Liberian English speakers use was coming or was going:

If they were coming elect Sunday, Aliu them were coming make helluva grumble.	'If they had elected Sunday, Aliu and those who supported him would have caused an uproar.'
If there was no rain yesterday, we were going suffer too bad.	'If it had not rained yesterday, we would have had a hard time.'

2.2 Aspect

2.2.1. Progressive

The LPE and less standard-like Settler marker is de. (It occurs in Interior English as well.) This marker is used both when the action is still in progress and when it was in progress formerly:

I de go.	'I'm going.'
We de talk something serious.	'We are/were talking about something important.'
That time, I de build my house.	'I was building my house then.'

(In these varieties, past habitual is also expressed by de:

First time, we de walk for Ducor.	'In the old days, we used to walk to Monrovia.')

In Interior English, Vernacular Liberian English, and more standard-like Settler English, the progressive is marked by using the -ing form of the verb (the "progressive" form). When the action is in progress, the appropriate present-tense form of be appears optionally.

I trying.	'I'm doing all right.'

Why you fasting on the girl so?	'Why do you keep botherinn the girl?'
She's just jabbinn you.	'She's just teasinn you.'
I'm comin.	'I'm comin right back.'

However, when the action is no longer in progress, was or were usually appears.

Come talk now what you were sayin.	'Tell us anain what you were sayin before.'
He was doin soldier work before.	'He used to be a soldier.'

To indicate that an action beaan in the past but continues up to the present (but, ordinarily, not beyond the present), been is used.

I been advisin this boy; he say he be damn he not doin it.	'I have warned this boy repeatedly, but he absolutely refuses to do it.'*

In Liberian English, the progressive form is used with many stative verbs, too.

She havin three children.	'She has three children.'
I am wishin to see the man.	'I would like to see the man.'
Pewu lovin to Kokoyoko.	'Pewu is Kokoyoko's lover.'

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*The phrase be damn, 'be adamant,' is never inflected for tense; that is, it is always be damn and never was damn, is damn, or will be damn.

2.2.2. Habitual

The most widely used marker of habitual and repeated actions is can.

The way how I big, they can let me draw water.	'Because I'm big, they let me draw water.'
He can steal.	'He steals habitually.'

Many Settler and Vernacular Liberian English speakers use dor as well. (dor is pronounced [dɔ], [lɔ], and [la].)

He dor steal.	'He steals habitually.'
She dor be to the house all the time.	'She is often at the house.'

In addition to marking habit, can also is used--as in Standard English--to indicate ability. (dor, on the other hand, cannot be used in this way. One cannot say, I dor do that one for you tomorrow.) Many speakers use can able rather than can:

You can able that one?	'Are you able to do that?'
You can able to walk from here to Freetown?	'Are you able to walk from here to Sierra Leone?'

2.2.3. Completive.

The marker used most often to emphasize that an action has been completed ("completive" or "perfective") is probably fini (from Eng. finish). Among more standard-like speakers, it precedes the progressive form.*

I fini forget/forgetting your name.	'I have forgetten your name.'

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*fini can precede an adjective as well. It carries a sense of 'totally, completely, thoroughly.'

That bitch fini booze.	'That guy is totally drunk.'
Vanii fini clever.	'Vanii is extremely intelligent.'

Kula fini move/moving behind God back.	'Kula has moved to an out-of-the-way place.'

na, done, and nohn are also used in various types of Liberian English. na is used in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, commonly in Vernacular Liberian English (especially in Monrovia), less commonly in Settler English.

The cat na steal the fish.	'The cat stole/has stolen the fish.'
Saytu na bust the secret.	'Saytu has divulged the secret.'

done is used in Settler English.

That boy done eat thirty-cent kalah, twenty-cent fritter, twenty-cent shortbread, and ten-cent groundpea.	'That boy has eaten thirty cents' worth of kalah (a pastry), twenty cents' worth of fritters. twenty cents' worth of shortbread, and ten cents' worth of peanuts.'
Me who sitting down here, I done make oil and sell it two cent a bottle.	'I myself have made palm oil and sold it for two cents a bottle.'

nohn [nɔ̃] appears to be confined to the speech of people in Marvland and Grand Gedeh countries.*

That man nohn come.	'That man has arrived.'
The car nohn hitch.	'The car got stuck.'

In addition, Standard English have and had are used by Settler, Interior, and Vernacular Liberian English speakers. Owing to final-consonant deletions, the forms are not usually distinctive from each other.

He told me, say, his ma had/have die.	'He told me that his mother had died.'

2.2.4. Hortative.

Some linguists use the term hortative to encompass should and such related phrases as ought to. In Liberian English, must generally covers this range.

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*The vowel of nohn is much more strongly nasalized than, say, the vowel of na. nohn comes from Eng. done. In many Kru languages, dɔ and nɔ̃ are possible words, but dɔ̃ is not. Speakers in this region sometimes say nɔ̃, i.e. nohn, for done in other contexts:

The food nohn.	'The food has finished cooking.'

I must come?	'Should I come?'
You must not bring it to me.	'Don't act like that to me.'
I hope no one must not steal my chicken.	'I hope no one will steal my chicken.' / 'No one should steal my chicken.'

Also, suppose to corresponds approximately to Standard English 'ought to.'

The Minister suppose to sack that man one time.	'The Minister ought to fire that man immediately.'
You suppose to know that in Liberia, time the flag be coming down, people can stand at attention.	'You ought to have known (i.e. were expected to know) that in Liberia people stand at attention while the flag is being lowered.'

2.3 Copulas

Some discussion of copulas was presented in Chapter Two. Then, it was noted that LPE distinguishes among equational and locational copulas, using be for the former and de for the latter. LPE does not use a copula in adjectival constructions. In the other non-standard varieties, the presence of an overt copula is variable: that is, sometimes a copula is present, and sometimes it is not:

He there. / He's there.

She fine. / She's fine.

In these varieties, when an overt copula is present, it is ordinarily the appropriate Standard English form of be. In general, the more standard-like the speech, the more likely that an overt copula will be present. (A non-standard form, noted in Chapter Two, is the Interior and Settler English equational copula sor, as in

You sor my brother. 'You are my brother.')

There is an additional copular construction for expressing equational relationships. The construction has that at the beginning of the sentence and with between the two noun phrases to be equated.

That your cousin with Nyankun?	'Is Nyankun your cousin?'
That not my friend with you.	'You're not my friend.'
That Tiklo godma with Sarzah wife.	'Sarzah's wife is Tiklo's godma.' (A godma is 'the older lover of a young boy.' A young girl often has a godpa, too.)

While this construction is used in Monrovia and elsewhere, it is employed most frequently in Grand Cape Mount County. (A comparable construction in Vai is presumably the basis for this one.)

2.4 Negation

The negative auxiliaries were introduced at the end of Chapter Three. They are no, never, not, don't, ain't, and can't. can't has a specialized domain, but the functions of the other five overlap.* More standard-like speakers also use didn't. (Apart from the contractions already listed, there are no widely used negative contractions: isn't is sometimes used, but, for example, he's not is much more common than he isn't.** aren't is used still less frequently, and won't, wouldn't, and mustn't are not in common usage outside Settler English.) As a general rule, ain't and not are the principal negative words in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, no and not in Interior English, and no in LPE.

Present and Past Tense: Verbs in the present or past are negated in the following ways. In Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, negation is achieved by using ain't plus the verb stem:

He ain't do it.	'He didn't do it.'
We ain't know.	'We don't/didn't know.'

don't is also used in present-tense contexts and, less often, in past contexts as well.

I don't got no fish to fry in yall part of thing.	'I want nothing to do with you.'
We don't know.	'We don't (or didn't) know.'

In LPE, no is used:

---

*never sometimes corresponds to Standard English didn't, e.g.

We never eat rice.	'We didn't eat rice (during some specified period).'

At other times, it corresponds to not yet (and carries with it the implication that the event or state in question may yet come to pass).

He never come.	'He hasn't come yet.'

*Several other American English contractions are not a part of Liberian English: I'll, I'd, I've and the corresponding forms with other persons and number are among the contractions not found in Liberian speech.

We no kill cow. 'We didn't kill a cow.'

My pa them no sabi book. 'People of my father's generation were not Western-educated.'

In Interior English, no, not, and the intermediate form nɔ (intermediate between no and not) are used.

He no/not/nɔ like it. 'He doesn't (or didn't) like it.'

Progressive: The progressive form of a verb is negated by placing not or ain't before the verb.

The old pa not zooting like before. 'The old man isn't dressed up the way he used to be.'

I ain't loving to none of these hopeless boy from on this campus here. 'I won't take any of the hopeless boys on this campus to be my lover.'

I was not attending that time. 'I wasn't going to school then.'

LPE speakers negate de by placing no before it.

Kanmoh no de build he house. 'Kanmoh isn't building a house.'

In Interior and Settler speech, however, no and de do not co-occur. Thus, the negation of

Tarnue de drink pepper soup.

is

Tarnue ain't/not drinking pepper soup. 'Tarnue isn't eating pepper soup.'

Habitual: can or dor are both replaced in the negative by can't.

I can't eat plenty rice. 'I don't eat a lot of rice.'

Completive: The negation of a completive marker depends upon whether it is the action or its completion which is being negated. In Standard English, the distinction for 'He has dug a well' is illustrated in these two sentences:

He hasn't finished digging a well.

He didn't dig a well.

In Liberian English, the negation of the action is accomplished by using a past negative form.

He ain't/not dig well.

The negation of completion is accomplished by using ain't or not with fini.

He not fini dig/digging well.

Hortative: must is negated by adding not.

You must not send goat to pick cassava leaf.	'You shouldn't send a goat to pick cassava leaf,' i.e. 'You shouldn't send an untrustworthy person on an important mission.'

suppose to is negated by placing ain't, don't, or not before it.

You ain't/don't/not suppose to talk that one.

Copulas: not is the principal negative copula in both Settler and Vernacular Liberian English. In the present, a be form (am/is/are) occurs optionally with not; in the other tenses, a be form is present.

He not inside.	'He's not inside.' / 'He's not in jail.'
That girl's not easy.	'That girl is beautiful.'
That time the road was not wohwoh like now.	'Then the road wasn't bad like it is now.'
The dance will not be in City Hall again.	'The dance is no longer going to be held in City Hall. (It will be held somewhere else.)'

ain't is used in the present.

He ain't there.

I ain't that kind of girl.

don't is used with a few adjectives. (This suggests that these adjectives may have become stative verbs for some speakers.)

I don't sure of the people.	'I'm not sure of the people.'
You don't serious.	'You're not sincere.'

In Interior English, not and no are the principal negative markers for copula constructions in the present and past.

no is the LPE negative copula, preceding be and de.

You no be good man.	'You're not a good person.'

My wife no de for the churchhouse.	'My wife isn't at the church.'

Multiple Negation: The use of more than one negative marker in a sentence is permitted in Liberian English, as the following sentences illustrate.

I not get no money.	'I don't have any money.'
That ain't no piece of headache.	'You don't have any headache at all. (You're just shamming.)'
I hope no one must not come steal my chicken.	'I hope no one will steal my chicken.' / 'No one should steal my chicken.'

Especially in Settler and Vernacular Liberian English, multiple negation is also used to give force to a statement.

I not standing no up.	'I refuse to stand up.'
My ma self can come here: I not freeing no Forkpa from no jailhouse.	'Even if my mother comes to plead with me, I'm not releasing Forkpa from jail.'

3. A NOTE ON MISTAKES AND RULES

In the discussion of a continuum of Liberian English speech, various features were identified with certain areas of the continuum, the locative copula de at the less standard end, the habitual marker dor in the middle, and so forth. Speakers of Liberian English, it was pointed out, command a range along the continuum. (Some of the factors which determine what part of their range they employ in a given context were presented in Chapter Two.)

At times, speakers make errors when trying to speak more standard-like English--more standard-like. that is, than their usual range. A common type of error in this situation is the overuse of some grammatical feature whose use the speaker has not yet learned perfectly. For example, speakers in the process of acquiring past-tense forms (and the Standard English tense system) may say

He came yesterday.

but they may also say

He will came tomorrow.

(Putting s at the end of a word where it does not belong is another example--probably the most commonly occurring one--of this same phenomenon.)

These and other mistakes should not be lumped together with the non-standard forms presented in the rest of this chapter and throughout the book--for example, the use of na or the use of see rather than saw in

I see him yesterday. The crucial difference is that the mistakes are essentially random, whereas the non-standard forms discussed earlier are rule-governed. Rules are crucial to communication, and it is the fact that Liberian Pidgin English, for example, has rules that makes it a viable medium for communication.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO LIBERIAN ENGLISH

PART TWO:

LISTENING TO LIBERIAN ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

While Part One attempts to deal with the whole spectrum of Liberian English, Part Two concentrates on Vernacular Liberian English, particularly as it is spoken in Monrovia. The language presented here is familiar to all English-speaking Liberians--except those with only the most rudimentary command of English. Liberian English is the mother tongue of one of the four principal speakers on the cassette; the others began speaking it when they started to school and now use it most of the time.

One generalization about Monrovia speech is that its speakers tend to talk faster than people from elsewhere in the country. In the earliest units, the people speaking on the tape speak more slowly than they would normally; in later units, they do not. While the monologues and dialogues you hear on the cassette are based on spontaneous speech--that is, the actual words of people (usually the speakers on the tape themselves)--they were written, edited, and rehearsed before being recorded. The exceptions are found in Units Sixteen and Eighteen, where extemporaneous speech was used.

In Units Two, Four, and Five, one of the characters--the taxi driver, the yana, and the tailor, respectively--speaks Liberian English with a Guinean accent, a recognition of the fact that these occupations are very often held by Guineans. The taped segment accompanying Unit Twelve is a radio announcement from ELBC. The speech in the announcement is informal Liberian Standard English.

The subject matter of the eighteen units of Part Two is meant to provide an introduction to the life of English-speaking Liberia. The type of life described is, at some times and in some ways, decidedly Western; it is, at the same time, always unmistakably Liberian. Like the language used, the cultural orientation is directed somewhat towards Monrovia. However, in the same way that the language presented is Monrovia speech but would be familiar throughout the country, so it is that many, if not most, of the phenomena described are found throughout the country.

Notes on Spelling and Transcription

The representation of Liberian English speech in Part Two is through Standard English spelling. One convention is employed: consonants (and syllables) subject to deletion in Vernacular Liberian English have been underlined, e.g.

You must send me all the good, yah.

This convention is sensitive to the environment in which a word appears. Take provides an example of this:

Take time. Take it.

Most speakers would delete the k in the first sentence but not in the

second (since in the latter the following word begins with a vowel); the underlining reflects this difference.

The underlining convention has not been applied to r, w, or y. They are, when they occur syllable-finally, considered part of the syllable's vowel. (Liberian English dialects being "r-less" varieties of English, a syllable-final r is never pronounced.)

Also, very often, a vowel followed by a nasal consonant will be nasalized and the nasal consonant itself will not be pronounced. (This occurs in French, too, e.g. bon [bɔ̃].) In such cases, the nasal consonant has not been underlined.

It should be noted that this format--Standard English spelling with the underlining of deletable consonants--simply calls attention to deletion. It is not a guide to pronunciation. An indication of the distance between the writing system employed and the actual pronunciation can be seen by comparing this system with a phonetic transcription (using International Phonetic Alphabet symbols). The example used is the second paragraph of the Fifth Listening Exercise (Why Turtle's Back Is Rough).

So the animal who call the feast, they came. They told them, say,
so de ɛnimɔ hu kɔɔ le fii, de kɛ̃m. de to dɛ̃, se,

"Yall people must give us yall name." So the bird them fini give their
"yɔɔ pipɔ mɔ ge ɔ yɔɔ nɛ̃." so de bʌɔ dɛ̃ feni ge dɛɛ

name to the people. And Turtle say, "My name, that 'All-of-Yall.'" So
nɛ̃ tu de pipɔ. ɛ̃ tʌtɔ se, "may nɛ̃, da 'ɔl-a-yɔɔ.'" so

every day when the people bring the food, Turtle ask, say, "Who the
ɛvri de wɛ̃ de pipɔ breŋ de fuu, tʌtɔ as, se, "hu də

food for?" They tell him, say, "The food for all of yall." Turtle will
fuu fɔ?" de tɛ hɛ̃, se, "de fuu fɔ ɔl a yɔɔ." tʌtɔ we

hold it and eat it. Every day this thing here happen. So the bird them,
hol e ɛ̃ id e. ɛvri de de teŋ hyɛ hæpɛ̃. so de bʌɔ dɛ̃,

they got vex, and they took their feathers from Turtle.
de gɔ vɛ, ɛ̃ de tu dɛ fɛlɛ frɔ̃ tʌtɔ.

The writing system used indicates deletable consonants. (Note, however, that, as in the example above, not every consonant marked as being

subject to deletion actually undergoes it.) Additionally, certain grammatical units have been omitted, units which show up in Standard English but are most often absent from Liberian English. The units in question are the following:

1. am, is, are;
2. possessive 's: and
3. plural endings.

Examples of their presence (in Standard English) and absence (in non-Standard Liberian English) are the following:

	Standard English	Vernacular Liberian English
1.	That's a lie.	That lie.
	I'm going home.	I reaching back.
2.	the man's hand	the man hand
	the old lady's feast	the old lady feast
3.	three teachers	three teacher
	cut it into very small pieces	cut it in small-small piece

(Chapter Four of Part One discusses the conditions which favor the absence of plural markers.) As a general rule, none of these grammatical markers have been transcribed. Occasionally, however, one of these markers is present on the tape. When that occurs, the marker has been transcribed. If the marker's presence is in fact optional, then it has been underlined.

Finally, the transcripts of the recorded material are meant to represent exactly what is on the tape. When the speaker makes an error or a false start, what he or she says is placed in parentheses. Thus, if on the tape, the speaker begins the sentence, "I will tell him," stops after will, and starts over, it is presented in the following way:

(I will,) I will tell him.

UNIT ONE: GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTIONS

Greetings

Every conversation begins with greetings. Even such transactions as buying stamps in a post office begin with a "hello" or a "morning." When two people meet on the street, either may initiate the conversation. (If they are of different age or status, the person who is younger or of lower social rank usually begins; however, regardless of respective ages or social stations, it is never incorrect to greet someone.) When you are walking past a house or a group of people, you begin the conversation. Similarly, when you go to a home, after you enter it, you are usually the one to begin the exchange of greetings.

When you see a group of people, greet all of them, even if you only know some of them. Greetings can be made plural by using the second-person-plural pronoun, e.g.

Yall, morning.

How yall doing?

(Another way of greeting a group is to say, "Good morning to all.")

Just as every conversation begins with a greeting, so it ends with a leave-taking. Ordinarily, you can do this by saying "Excuse," by announcing your intention to leave ("I'm going, yah"), or by stating your destination ("I'm reaching in town"). When a group of people is present, even if you have only been speaking to one of them, take your leave from the whole group, e.g.

Yall, excuse.

(TEXT) Boima and Sister Harriet

BOIMA	SISTER HARRIET
Sister Harriet, morning.	Morning o, Boima.
How are you today?	I fine. How about you?
So-so o.	How your ma and pa?
They all right o.	Say hello to them for me, yah.
OK.	Where you going, you boy?
I reaching in town to see the game, sister.	Ay, you boy, you like football business, ehn?

What to do, sister?

OK. You must take time on the field, yah.

I will try. I gone, yah.

OK.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

o and yah: Many Liberian English sentences end with o or yah. The role of this o is difficult to characterize: Often its presence signals personal involvement in the sentence just made. (This suggestion comes from William Welmers.) Thus, the two sentences

That man na come. 'That man has come.'

That man na come o. 'That man has come o.'

would have the same meaning, but the presence of the o at the end of the second sentence implies that the man's arrival is of special interest to the speaker and/or his audience. Often, o reinforces a warning.

When o is used with a greeting, it can signal friendship (a form, after all, of personal involvement)--"morning o" being warmer than "morning."

Another facet of the use of o is to give emphasis to a sentence. "It gonna be hot o" can be expressed in American English by 'It's gonna be very hot.'

yah is a shortened form of "you hear?". It emphasizes a statement and often appears with a command, an appeal, or an expression of sympathy.

Give me, yah. 'Please give me some.'

Sorry, yah.

Like o, yah can signal personal involvement. Thus,

"People's children hungry, yah."

suggests that the speaker is hungry. o and yah do not both appear at the end of the same sentence.

Sister Harriet: The use of kinship terms such as sister ("Sister Harriet"), ma ("Ma Hawa"), and uncle ("Uncle Fole") in forms of address need not imply actual kinship. They are also used as signs of respect for someone older than the speaker. Usually, ma, pa, auntie, and uncle are reserved for someone of one's parents' generation or older. Sister or brother may be applied to anyone older than oneself.

morning: In Monrovia, the greeting morning is usually used only in the morning. In rural areas, morning is used by some people when they are greeting a particular person for the first time that day, regardless of the hour.

so-so o: a formulaic response to questions about one's well-being. Other such responses are "I fine," "Things are rough," "I trying," "Poor boy just trying," "Poor boy fighting hard to survive." They all can be loosely translated by 'I'm OK.'

How your ma and pa: Inquiries about the well-being of one's family, especially about one's parents, are often a part of the exchange of greetings. Sometimes, they take the form, "Where your ma?" Answers such as "She there" or "She to the house" mean 'She's OK.'

you boy (and you girl): a form of address to a young person. It can be used to address or call a child whose name is not known to the speaker, e.g. "You boy, come here." It also can be used, as in this case, when the speaker knows the youth's name. This latter use frequently occurs with a warning or with gossip:

> You better move from in the yard, you girl.
>
> You boy, let me tell you....

reaching in town: going to town.

football: soccer.

business: a widely used word meaning 'matters, concerns.'

what to do?: an expression of resignation; that's how it is.

you must take time: be careful.

I will try: I will do my best.

(SECOND TEXT) Boima and John

BOIMA	JOHN
Hey, man, what's up?	Nothing much.
How you been keeping, man?	I been sick, but now (I)I getting all right. But how about you?
Well, I not bad o. Where you coming from?	I coming from Chugbor way.
Where you going?	I going in town.
What you going in town for?	I going to see about some business.
You staying long?	No. I just want to go-come.
Ba, you must take time o.	OK. See you, yah.

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

how you been keeping: how have you been?

where you coming from, where you going, etc.: Inquiries of this sort are often a part of the exchange of greetings. They are considered polite, not prying. At the same time, vague answers are acceptable. For example, "where you going?" may be answered by "I going to walk about." "I going to see about some business" is another example of a vague but acceptable answer.

Chugbor way: Chugbor is a neighborhood in the Old Road area; way means 'in or in the vicinity of.'

go-come: to go someplace and then return. Ordinarily, its use suggests that the stay will be a brief one.

ba: one of several terms of address meaning 'friend.' Many speakers, including the one on the tape, pronounce it with an implosive b, [ɓa]. The word is Bassa in origin, and the Bassa pronunciation is [ɓa].

(TEXT) Boima and Mulbah

BOIMA	MULBAH
	Hey, Boima, what you saying?
Nothing, my man. Just trying. What's about you?	Man, you know, things are rough, man.
When you came?	I came last week Wednesday.
What news in the country?	Nothing bad.
The people fini cutting rice?	Oh yeah.
I know you brought plenty country bread, ehn?	Yeah o.
Then I know you enjoy, my man.	Yeah, my man, we damage the food in that place o. How the city been treating you, bra?
It rough, Jack.	Where you going now?
I reaching on the field. I want to see the match.	Who playing?
Barrolle and I.E.	Pshaw. I know it will be rough.
Yeah. But, my man, you don't want to see the game?	Yeah, man, I want to see it, but I can't make it. Since I came, I ain't see my old people yet. I want to go to them today.

I saw your old pa the other day o. He was not looking bad.

OK. Tell the old pa them hello, yah.

OK, my man.

(END OF TEXT)

Ehehn, then that good news o, but let me reach there and see.

OK. Enjoy the game o. I see you, yah.

NOTES

what's about: For many speakers, the phrase is what's about X?, not what about X? This is true in formal contexts as well.

Wednesday: Many speakers pronounce this as a three-syllable word. This pronunciation reflects the influence of the word's spelling upon its pronunciation.

what news?. ...nothing bad: The frequently asked question, what news?, is usually answered by "nothing bad," "no bad," or "nothing strange."

fini cutting: finish harvesting.

plenty: a lot of.

country bread: a flour made from rice. (The newly harvested rice is preferred.) It is often eaten with sugar, water, and sometimes peanuts.

I know you enjoy: I know you enjoyed yourself. If someone had access to country bread at harvest time, through--for example--his mother or girl friend, then it can be assumed that he was well-fed during his visit. enjoy is somewhat stronger in Liberian English (than in American or British English), its use implying that one has captured all the pleasure or benefit possible from a situation.

damage the food: ate heartily (slang).

bra: friend.

Jack: friend.

I reaching on the field: I'm going to the soccer field.

match: soccer match.

Barrolle and I.E.: two Monrovia soccer clubs. Mighty Barrolle and I.E. (Invincible Eleven) are--in 1981--the most popular of Monrovia teams. A measure of their popularity is that Antoinette Tubman Stadium fills up as much as seven hours before a big game between the two of them. Other Monrovia teams include St. Joseph's Warriors, Bame, NPA (National Port Authority), and Dynamic Sparrow.

eshaw: an exclamation of wonder or respect.

he was not looking bad: he seemed to be in good health.

Introductions

When two people meet through a third person, the latter is expected to introduce them to each other.

In Western contexts, when Liberians introduce themselves, it is usually the case that a man will give his last name, "I'm Jones," or, less frequently, both his first and last name, "I'm Bestman Jones," while a woman will give her first name, "I'm Comfort," or both her first and last name, "I'm Comfort Jones." A married woman may give her married name, "I'm Mrs. Jones."

(TEXT) Boima, Fatu, and Boakai

FATU	BOIMA	BOAKAI
Boima, morning.		
	Oh, Fatu, that you?	
Yeah o. Boima, please meet my cousin Boakai, yah. Boakai, this is Boima, Oldman Binda son.		
		Oh, hello, yah, Boima. I know your old pa o. Nice meeting you.
	Oh, Boakai, hello. How are you?	
		I fine.
	Fatu, I ain't see you for long.	
Hmm. I been upcountry o.		
	How the place?	
No bad news there.		
	How your people?	
They all right o, but the only thing, my grandma die.		

FATU

OK. Now the people trying to fix thing for the old lady yeast. They sent me and Boakai to our uncle in town.

But what news with you? How you coming on, my man?

You still staying with Auntie Hawa them in Gardnersville?

But how, you not attending again?

OK. We reaching down the road, yah.

All right. See you, yah, Boima.

(END OF TEXT)

BOIMA

Oh. No mind, yah.

Ehn.

Well, poor boy just trying.

No. I jobbing now at JFK o. This time, I got my own room to Fiama.

No. I attending afternoon school.

OK. I'll see yall, yah.

BOAKAI

OK, Boima.

NOTES

oldman: a term of respect.

old pa: here, 'father'. It is not disrespectful. It can be used to refer to any old man, not just one's father.

I ain't see you for long: I haven't seen you for a long time.

upcountry: This term, in the country, and in the interior all refer to the part of Liberia away from the coast. These phrases, especially "in the country," can also refer to coastal regions which are away from Monrovia.

the only thing: can be used in place of, or with, "but."

my grandma die: Note that the politeness formulas are used first; then, afterwards, the bad news is introduced.

no mind: a common expression of sympathy and consolation. It is used in response to any misfortune or news of it. "Never mind" and "sorry" are also used and--with reference to bereavement only--also "have my sympathy."

OK: here, an acknowledgement of the expression of sympathy.

old lady: like old man, a term of respect.

feast: a celebration in honor of the deceased, usually held forty days or more after the person's death. This custom is observed among peoples in the Mande-West Atlantic sphere. (See Unit Fourteen.)

they sent me and Boakai to our uncle in town: Fatu and Boakai have been sent to obtain their uncle's contribution to the cost of staging the feast.

Auntie Hawa them: Auntie Hawa and the others. This is an example of the associative-plural use of them. When a social unit is being described, usually the most important member of the unit (or the one best known to speaker and hearer) is the one referred to:

my pa them 'my father and the others in our family'

jobbing: working.

JFK: the government hospital in Monrovia.

this time: now.

Fiama: a neighborhood in Sinkor near JFK.

but how: an expression which indicates bewilderment or confusion. 'But how could this be?'

attending: attending school.

no. I attending afternoon school: In reply to negative questions, yes and no are often used with the reverse significance of American usage. The answer "Yes" to the question "Aren't you well?" could mean 'Yes, it is true that I'm not well.'

Most Liberian schools meet in the morning, usually from eight to one. Afternoon schools, as their name suggests, meet in the afternoon, roughly from 1:30 to 5:00. Afternoon schools are also called evening schools. Night schools meet at six and after. The term evening school reflects the Liberian usage of evening. For many speakers, evening re-

fers to the daylight hours after twelve midday. Also, for many, the word noon refers to the first few hours after twelve midday. However, noon is not a widely used term; evening is.

yall: the second-person plural pronoun. It comes from you all. It is frequently written by Liberians as your, even in contexts where it is pronounced [yuaa].

UNIT TWO: GETTING AROUND IN MONROVIA, PART ONE: TAXIS AND BUSES

TAXIS

As the cost of gasoline has risen, taxi fares in Liberia have risen. Still, Monrovia continues to have a reasonably priced taxi system. As of early 1981, the following zone system is being used to determine fares between points in an area including central Monrovia, Sinkor, and Bushrod Island (excluding Barnersville, Gardnersville, and the other communities along the Freeway). The city is divided into zones. The Relda Cinema, Monrovia City Hall, the Mesurado River, and the entrance to the Freeport are the reference points, the boundaries of the zones. If you stay within a zone or cross into the next zone (that is, pass one of the reference points), your fare is 40¢. If you pass two reference points, you pay 65¢; three, 95¢; and four, $1.25. Each person in a taxi must pay. Thus, if two people are going from the beer factory on Bushrod Island to the Methodist-Lutheran Bookstore on Ashmun Street in central Monrovia, each would pay 65¢, since the taxi would pass two reference points, the entrance to the Freeport and the Mesurado River bridge.

A driver has the option of declining a fare. Thus, people generally tell the driver the area they are going to and get his assent before entering the car. A driver may pick up other passengers on his way. If their stops come before yours, he will drop them off before he drops you off. Thus, riding in a taxi gives you a chance to see every corner of the city.

Many, perhaps most, taxi drivers are not natives of Liberia. They are Guinean émigrés, and they speak Liberian English--primarily Liberian Pidgin English--with a "Guinean accent." Some characteristics of their speech are the following:

a) the use of <u>be</u> as a copula (as opposed to <u>is</u>, <u>are</u>, etc.), as in "He be teacher";

b) the use of <u>no</u> in most negative environments, as in "I no get money" ('I don't have money');

c) the addition of a vowel at the end of short verbs which end in a consonant, e.g.

tell	[tɛli]
get	[gɛli]
like	[laki]

d) and the insertion of a vowel into a word-initial consonant cluster, as in

spoil	[sipɔle]

The speech presented here is that of a Guinean taxi driver.

(TEXT) The Taxi Driver

(Taxi stops)

PCV: Broad Street.

DRIVER: Let's go.

(PCV enters car)

PCV: Morning.

DRIVER: What part of Broad Street?

PCV: Finance. I got ten dollars. What you say?

DRIVER: I no get change, but we go stop to gas station.

PCV: OK.

DRIVER: I know you be money-man o, bossman. You going Finance, and you tell me, say, you got money to change. Good friend, come carry me to America.

PCV: No, my friend. That ten dollars there, that is my last money for the month. And I'm just reaching to my friend at Finance. Your part, you're the money-man. Everyday, you're carrying the people up and down for money.

DRIVER: Ah, it not be so o, bossman. I run the taxi whole day, I can't see no good money. Everyday I de report bossman money. That twenty dollar o and Sunday fifteen. Business good o, it no good o, I still report to bossman. The car spoil, I fix it. The engine no good, I work on it. And this time, gas palaver rough--plenty money. First time, ah! We enjoy o, but now--no!

PCV: Yeah, for true, the gas palaver is hard.

DRIVER: An-hanh! You see, bossman, youself you know.

(Taxi enters gas station, stops)

DRIVER: Bossman, you can change ten dollar?

GAS SELLER: Bring it.

DRIVER: Bossman, where the money?

PCV: Here it is.

DRIVER: Here it, bossman. Make haste, we want to go.

GAS SELLER: Here your money here, my man.

(Taxi re-enters traffic, then stops again)

FATU: Across.

DRIVER: What part of across?

FATU: Logantown Cinema.

DRIVER: Logantown inside?

FATU: No. I say, right to Logantown Cinema there.

DRIVER: OK.

(FATU enters car)

FATU: Yall, morning.

DRIVER: Morning.

PCV: Morning.

DRIVER: I dropping this man to Finance before o.

FATU: OK. It all right.

(At Finance, taxi stops, PCV gets out of car)

PCV: Thank you.

DRIVER: OK.

(END OF TEXT)

Monrovia is divided into numerous smaller communities--Bassa Community, Jallahtown, Plumkor, Point Four, Vaitown, and so on. If you are going to Sinkor between the USAID building and JFK Hospital or to central Monrovia, the grid of named streets makes it easy for you to tell the taxi driver where you are going. If you are headed to other parts of town, once you have named the area, use landmarks to be more precise. Most often, people use government buildings (IPA (Institute of Public Administration) in the Old Road area, Public Health on Mamba Point), other large buildings (the Prophet Church on Center Street, Old Road Mansion), bars (Nagbe Bar in Sinkor, Biafra on Bushrod Island), or other landmarks (Mandingo Graveyard in the Old Road area, the Bong Mine Bridge on Bushrod Island).

NOTES

morning: The rule that every conversation begins with a greeting is adjusted in the case of taxis. Wait until entering the car before greeting

the driver and any passengers already in the car.

Finance: the Ministry of Finance.

I got ten dollars: A person who has no change--that is, nothing smaller than a five-dollar note--is expected to notify the driver. If the driver is unable to make change, he will ordinarily stop at a gas station for change.

money-man: a well-to-do person.

carry: take. carry is often used to mean 'to escort, to convey (someone).' Frequently, tote is used where American or British English would use 'carry.'

your part: as for you.

de: an auxiliary marking habitual action or action in progress.

report bossman money: If a driver does not own the car which he is driving, he gives the owner a specified amount each day (he "reports bossman's money")--in this case, $15 on Sunday and $20 on every other day. Any money he makes over and above this amount, he keeps; however, if his take for a day is less than the agreed upon amount, he must take money out of his own pocket in order to reach the amount. At the same time, the driver is paid a monthly salary by the owner of the car.

business good o, it no good o: The o's mean 'whether or not'; they are different from the "personal involvement" o discussed earlier. The sentence means, 'Whether or not business is good, I still have to give the owner his money everyday.'

the car spoil: if the car breaks down.

the engine no good: if the engine is not working well. A driver is responsible for maintenance and minor repairs: the owner, for major repairs.

gas palaver: Palaver, like business, is a widely used word which means--in contexts like this--'matters.' Here, it is a reference to the high cost of gasoline. The driver, not the owner, pays for the gas.

youself you know: you yourself know.

for true: really; it is true.

make haste: hurry up. make it is also used.

across: on the other side of the Mesurado River. In this case, across means 'Bushrod Island.'

Logantown inside: inside Logantown. The driver's questions are aimed at establishing how far he will have to go. Drivers are often loath to go deep into Lakpasee, Logantown, or the Old Road area since it involves going a relatively far distance without any increase in fare.

I say: a way of emphasizing one's original statement.

before: first.

BUSES

Monrovia also has a good bus system. Buses which you enter on the side go from Logantown or New Krutown along the main Bushrod Island road to Waterside, up the hill to Broad Street, down Lynch Street to United Nations Drive, across to Capitol By-Pass, and then on to Tubman Boulevard and the Old Road; on their trip in the other direction, they follow the same route except that they go from the Capitol By-Pass directly on to Broad Street. The Airfield [ɛfi] buses, which you enter from the back, go from Duala (the neighborhood of the beer factory on Bushrod Island) along the main Bushrod Island road and follow the same route through town as the Old Road [ooro] buses until just past JFK Hospital, where they leave Tubman Boulevard and head to the vicinity of Spriggs-Payne Airfield, ending their route less than a mile past the Airfield in Lakpasee. On their trip in the opposite direction, Airfield buses, too, go from the Capitol By-Pass directly on to Broad Street.

Sometimes buses only make half the trip, stopping at Waterside. The carboy calls out the destination. He also uses hand-signals to indicate to potential passengers where the bus is going. If a bus is coming from the Old Road and is in Sinkor or central Monrovia: if the carboy motions towards his left, the bus is going to New Krutown; to his right, to Logantown. And if he points his index finger up in the air and makes a circle with his hand, the bus is turning around at Waterside.

The cost (in early 1981) of a busride is 35 cents, regardless of the length of the ride. There are other buses, operated by the Monrovia Transit Authority, with a different fare scale. These include the large blue-and-white buses (called Tata buses) which operate along the Old Road route but which also go to Gardnersville and Paynesville.

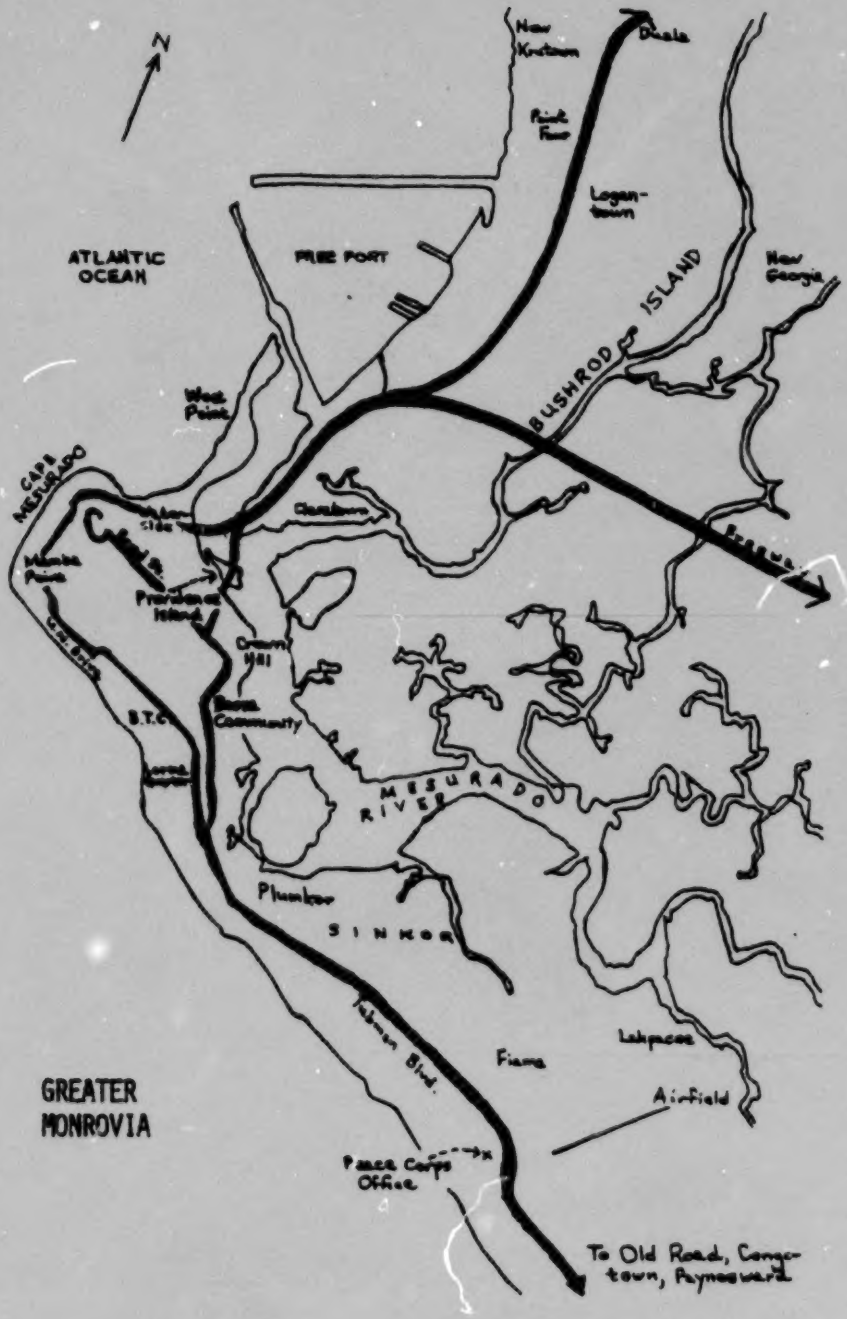
To get off the bus, a passenger tells the car boy, "Bus, stop." In central Monrovia and--to a growing extent--in the outlying areas, there are fixed bus stops, and buses will only take on and let off passengers at these points. Elsewhere, for example along much of the Old Road and inside New Krutown, the bus stops wherever someone wants on or off.

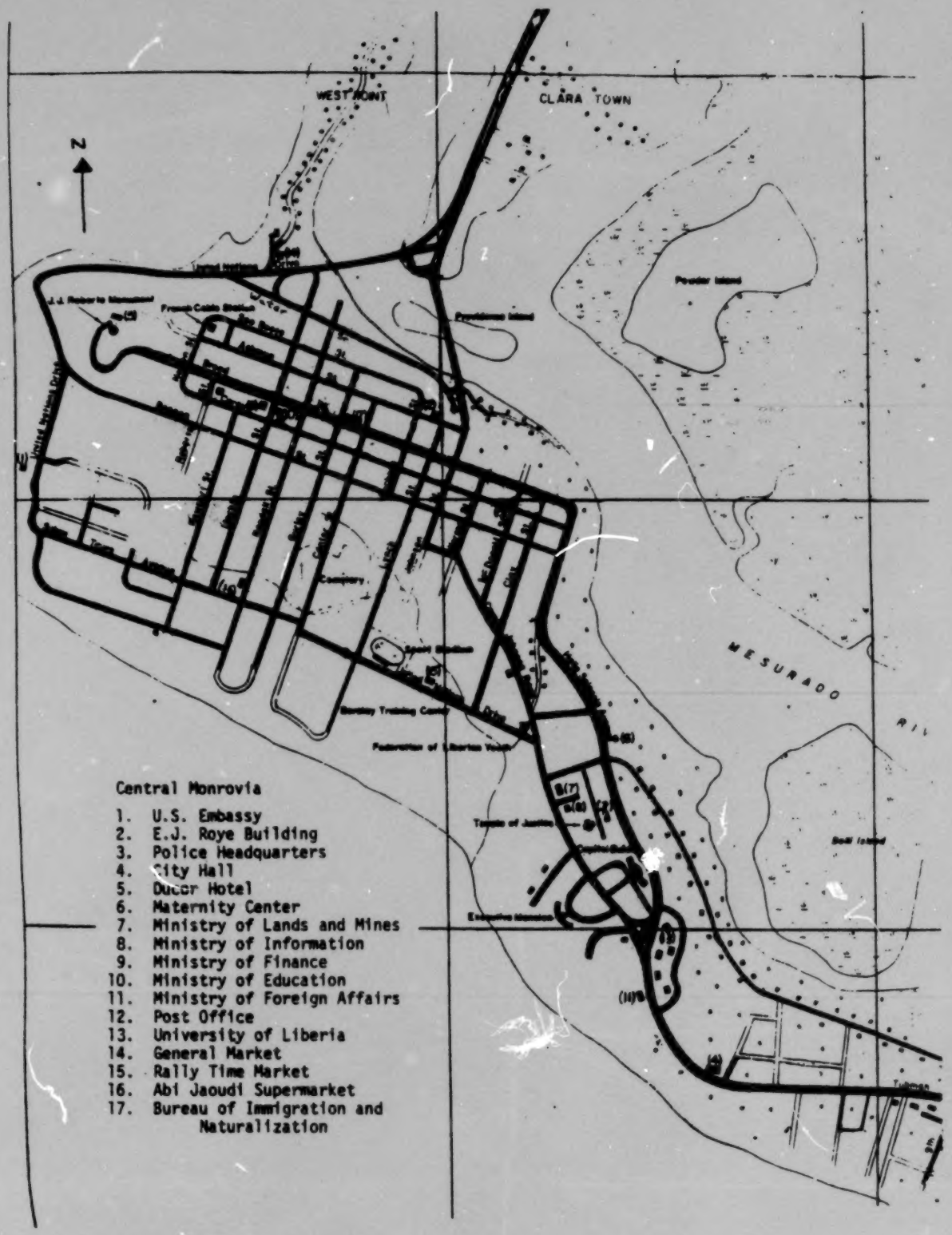
The carboys have their own names for many of the bus stops. Human Being Garage is the JFK stop, and Baby Factory (or Junior Boy Factory) is the Maternity Center stop. Some others are ID Card Factory for the University of Liberia (since students with ID cards pay only 20 cents), Old Lady Camp for Fiama (since, allegedly, a lot of old women get on and off at this stop), and Palm Wine Station for the first bus stop after JFK on the Airfield road (because palm wine is sold there every afternoon).

BUS DRIVERS AND CARBOYS

Like taxi drivers, most bus drivers and carboys are Guinean émigrés.

The bus driver, too, must "report bossman's money," i.e., he must give a fixed sum to the bus owner each day, a sum which is substantially more than what a taxi driver gives. Like taxi drivers, bus drivers are allowed to keep any amount taken in over that sum, and they, too, are paid a fixed salary. While carboys receive food and lodging from their employer, they receive no salary. They are, in a sense, apprentices to the drivers, and they are waiting for their own chance to drive.


N
ATLANTIC OCEAN
FREE PORT
New Kru town
Pipe Line
Logan-town
Duala
New Georgia
BUSHROD ISLAND
West Point
CAPE MESURADO
Clara town
Providence Island
Crown Hill
B.T.C.
Broad Community
MESURADO RIVER
Plumbor
SINKOR
Johnson Blvd.
Fiama
Lakpaca
Airfield
Peace Corps Office
To Old Road, Congo-town, Paynesville
GREATER MONROVIA


WEST POINT
CLARA TOWN
N
MESURADO
Central Monrovia
1. U.S. Embassy
2. E.J. Roye Building
3. Police Headquarters
4. City Hall
5. Ducor Hotel
6. Maternity Center
7. Ministry of Lands and Mines
8. Ministry of Information
9. Ministry of Finance
10. Ministry of Education
11. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12. Post Office
13. University of Liberia
14. General Market
15. Rally Time Market
16. Abi Jaoudi Supermarket
17. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization

You Can Get There From Here

Often, in Liberian villages and towns, when you are a stranger and ask directions to someone's house, the person whom you ask responds by getting a small boy to take you there. In Monrovia, that usually isn't possible. Instead, a person will give you directions, and it is up to you to get where you want to go. You may find the directions difficult to follow. The reference points may be different from the type you are used to hearing, and location-words such as on the right of and in front of may not always mean what you thought they did.

Below, directions are given to four locations in Monrovia. As you listen to each one, try to form a map in your mind of where you are being directed to. Would you be able to find the house? If you don't think so, what further questions would you ask?

(FIRST TEXT) New Krutown

I stay in New Krutown. If you want to find my house, here the direction. Since you coming from the Peace Corps Office, you will take the bus coming from Old Road. When you hear the people say, "New Krutown, New Krutown," you get in the bus. OK, when you get in the bus now, yall will pass by Relda Cinema, yall will come, yall pass by Gabriel Cinema. Then yall will come down Waterside. When yall get down Waterside, you must not get down from in the bus. Stay in the bus. Then yall will cross the bridge. When yall go go go, yall will pass Vaitown, then yall will pass Freeport, then yall will come and pass Logantown. When yall pass Logantown now, (yall will) then yall will reach to Bong Mine Bridge. Yall will pass Bong Mine Bridge. When yall pass Bong Mine Bridge, then yall will pass Datsun garage. Then the bus will turn on the left to go in New Krutown. When yall get to New Krutown, yall will pass the first bus stop. Then yall will pass the second bus stop. Now, when yall get to the second bus stop, (you) they ain't get no other bus stop again. You will have to say "Bus, stop," because you will not see no more

signboard. But after the second bus stop, you will go go go. Then, you will see one gas station on the right. You will pass the gas station. When you pass the gas station little bit, you will see one place where they can make casket. You will pass there. When you pass there now, coming, you will see one big open place, right before one prophet church. Just get down there in that big open place. In that big open place, you will see, that the place that the coaltar road bending on the left. Now when you get there, get down. You will see one dusty road going on your right, side the New Krutown Post Office. When you get down there now, (to) on the dusty road, you will go go go. When you be going, you will see one big upstairs house. Pass by that upstairs house. When you pass small, you will see one dusty road going on your left. That one small little dusty road. You pass by that dusty road. When you go go go go, you will see one old zinc house. When you get to that old zinc house, just ask anybody in the yard for me. If you don't find anybody, soon you pass by that old zinc house, just bend on your left. You will see one zinc white house standing there. That my house.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

Just as you would anywhere else, when you are given directions in Monrovia, you should build as much as possible on what you already know. For example, if you were already familiar with the prophet church in question, you could build from that knowledge by disregarding most of the information leading up to that point, establishing the prophet church as a point of reference for subsequent directions, and concentrating on what follows.

NOTES

Peace Corps: This phrase is pronounced [pisko], [piskop], and [piskops].

come down Waterside: come down the hill to Waterside. Waterside is the shopping area near the Mesurado River. It includes the General Market area, part of Mechlin Street, and the length of Water Street.

get down Waterside: get down to Waterside.

get down from in the bus: get off the bus.

when yall go go go: when you (pl.) go for some distance. Repeating the verb indicates the continuation of the action over a period of time.

you will not see no more signboard: Bus stops are indicated by signs, but, along most of the New Krutown road, there are no designated bus stops.

little bit: a little bit.

coming: when you are coming.

one big open place: here, an intersection where the buildings are set back from the road.

prophet church: a Pentecostal church.

get down: get off.

coaltar road: paved road.

bending on the left: turning left. To bend means 'to turn.' Even when two roads are at right angles, one still bends to get from one to the other.

dusty road: unpaved road.

side: beside.

upstairs house: a house having two or more stories.

pass small: go a little way past it. small is widely used in place of 'a little.'

small little dusty road: a very narrow road, a path.

you pass by that dusty road: In some situations this sentence could mean, 'You take that dusty road.' Here, however, it means, 'You walk past that dusty road.'

soon you pass by: as soon as you walk past.

(SECOND TEXT) Claratown

If you want to find my house, I live in Claratown. If you get in the bus, come down to Claratown Store. They got one road leading straight from the store to Claratown. Coming from this side, the road on your right. You follow the road straight. You go all the way inside Claratown. Now--don't go left, don't go right--just go straight. When you go straight,

you reach to one place with plenty Fula shop.

You pass by the Fula shop. On your right, right side the road, you fini passing the last shop, there one house there, and other road side that house, on your right. Go with that road till you come to the new concrete building; it not far from the road. It got glass windows. That the house there. It right in front of the mosque, the only mosque in Claratown. That the new house got whitewash.

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

Claratown: a community on Bushrod Island near the Mesurado River bridges.

come down to: get off at.

they got one road: they got is frequently used in settings where Standard English would use 'there is/are.' one is often used as the indefinite article, i.e. as 'a/an' would be used in Standard English. Some speakers use only one and do not use a/an.

coming from this side: in this context, 'if you are coming from central Monrovia.'

plenty Fula shop: many small shops, each of which sells bread, drinks and some canned goods. The owners of many of these shops are Fula; hence the name. (There is further discussion of shop and store in Unit Seventeen.) In a noun phrase, when an adjective indicates that the noun is plural in number or when it is clear from the context that the noun is plural, the noun itself is not marked, i.e., -s is not added: plenty Fula shop, ten dollar, six yard, and so on. Moreover, once it has been established that the noun is plural, the plural marker need not be present in subsequent references, either. Thus, in the next sentence in the text: You pass by the Fula shop. Where there is an irregular form in Standard English like 'women' or 'children,' it will often be used in Liberian English, but many less-standard speakers will follow the more general rule (of not marking the plural) and say plenty child, six woman.

right side the road: right next to the road.

you fini passing the last shop: after you have passed the last shop.

that the new house got whitewash: That is the new house which has whitewashed walls.

(THIRD TEXT) Old Road

Here how to find my place: Ehneh you know the German Embassy area, where the Old Road buses them can come down turn round to go back? Ehn't you know there, ehn? OK. Now, when you take the bus, the Old Road bus, you coming, look for the last dusty road before you enter the coaltar. It on the right, because they got one on the left, too. So the last dusty road on the right before you enter the coaltar; tell the bus to stop there. You get down. Just look straight across. From where you standing, you can see plenty bus. They for one Mister Johnson, and he live right there. So, you will take the road and go straight across. Bend side the bus then on the right, and the house what you see there, that my house. It got brown and beige paint, and it got some red flower in the front of the house. That right there I live.

(END OF THIRD TEXT)

NOTES

ehneh and ehn't: Both ehneh and ehn't are negative question words. When one of them begins a sentence, its meaning usually corresponds to 'don't,' 'didn't,' 'isn't,' or 'aren't.'

Ehn't I told you?

Ehneh your grandma can speak Bassa?

Ehn't she fine?

ehneh can also appear at the end of a sentence as a tag question comparable to French 'n'est-ce pas.'

We four, ehneh? 'There are four of us, aren't there?'

Finally, ehneh as a response to a statement means 'is that so?' or 'you don't say.'

"Momo came from Monrovia yesterday." "Oh, ehneh?"

buses them: buses. Here, them is a plural marker. Thus, bus is marked twice for the plural, once by -es and once by them. buses and bus them are also possible forms.

where the Old Road buses them can come down turn round to go back:

where the Old Road buses turn around and go back, i.e. where the bus route ends. can indicates habitual action in co texts like this one.

you coming: when you are coming.

enter: get to.

coaltar: paved road.

it on the right because they got one on the left, too: i.e. take the last road on the right, not the left.

just look straight across: look straight down the dusty road.

plenty bus: many buses.

they for: they belong to. This is a frequently used construction for showing possession:

The book for me. 'The book is mine.'

That cow for the chief. 'That cow belongs to the chief.'

go straight across: go straight down the road.

bend side the bus then on the right: turn right just next to (after) the buses.

it got some red flower in the front of the house: Like they got, it got is used where Standard English would use 'there is/are.'

(FOURTH TEXT) Nippytown

If you want to find where I can stay, go to Old Road. You will see two gas station on Old Road. The first one, that the one they call Mursobi. The second one, that the one they use to call Chupee. OK. Right across the road in front of Chupee Gas Station, they got one dusty road there. This dusty road here go to Nippytown. It pass between one garage and one radio shop o.

Follow this road and go straight. You will reach to a spot right by the garage, it a big ditch there, water can settle there when it rain. Go straight now. First you pass one art shop, where they can do different-different printing. On that road, you pass by one concrete building, too.

Now, when you pass the art shop and the concrete building, then you come to one small little kitchen. When you pass by the kitchen, you stand on that same road, the road still straight in front of you o, but leave it now. OK? Now you see one big white house on your left, right after the kitchen. Right after that, you see another house again. Go between the houses. Go straight with that path, in a corner. Go between those houses. You'll find another house facing you, right in front of the road. Then, the time you reach to that house now, you bend on the right. When you bend, you see one zinc round house, with Bandi people living there. The next house from the zinc house on your right, that my uncle them house there o. That the place where I can stay. You think you can find it?

Anyway, when you reach to the kitchen, tell the people you looking for Oldman Bai house. Somebody will carry you there.

(END OF FOURTH TEXT)

NOTES

Although the overwhelming majority of words found in Liberian English are also found in American English, some of these words have very different meanings in the two. For example, easy--when applied to a person--means 'easy-going, quiet' in Liberia. Thus, "That girl too easy" means 'That girl is very easy-going.' (too means 'very' and need not connote excess.) The fact that words can have Liberian meanings different from their American meanings can prove crucial with regard to directions. For example, three of the landmarks on the way to Oldman Bai's house are a ditch, a kitchen, and a zinc round house. Do you have a mental image of each of these? If you are American, the image probably does not fit the thing being described. The ditch in question is 'a large but shallow hole,' not 'a narrow channel.' The kitchen is 'a structure with a roof but without walls.' Finally, a zinc round house is not 'a round house whose walls are made of zinc (corrugated galvanized iron).' Rather, it is 'a house with zinc around it.' Thus, no cooking need be done in a kitchen, and a zinc round house is usually rectangular.

the one they call Mursobi: the one which is called Mursobi. Frequently, Standard English passives--e.g., "the car was stolen"--are expressed in Liberian English by a construction which uses they--i.e., "they stole the car"--even when the agent (here, the thief) is not known.

right across the road in front of Chupee Gas Station: across the street from the Chupee Gas Station.

it a big ditch there: there's a big ditch there. Here, as noted, ditch refers to a large but shallow hole, not to a narrow channel.

different-different printing: many different types of printing. Reduplication intensifies an adjective.

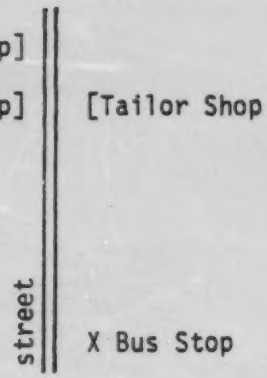
the road still straight in front of you: the road continues straight.

in a corner: that is, the path narrows.

road: path.

About Location-Words

When you are giving or receiving directions, you need to be sure that you and the person whom you're speaking with understand what the other means by behind, in front, and other location words. For an illustration of how Liberians use location-words, look at the following map. From the perspective of someone standing at the bus stop, the relationship of the tailor shop to the cook shop can be expressed in a number of different ways in Liberian English.



The tailor shop is in front (of) the cook shop.
The tailor shop is on the right of the cook shop.
(The cook shop is on the left of the tailor shop.)
The tailor shop is before the cook shop.
The tailor shop is across from the cook shop.

Still from the bus stop, the relationship of the butcher shop to the cook shop could be expressed in these ways:

The butcher shop is past the cook shop.
The butcher shop is beside the cook shop.
The cook shop is before the butcher shop.

The butcher shop is above the cook shop.
The butcher shop is on the right of the cook shop.
(The cook shop is on the left of the butcher shop.)
From the cook shop, the butcher shop is in front.
The cook shop is in front (of) the butcher shop.

Consider all the ways in which in front (of) is used. Not all speakers use a phrase like this or a word like before in the same way. If you are going to be able to follow directions, you will have to know what the person giving directions means when he uses such words. And, if you're going to give directions, make sure the person to whom you're giving them knows what you mean when you use these words.

UNIT FOUR: THE YANA

Vendors of a thousand items hawk their wares on the streets of Monrovia's commercial districts: the Waterside, Camp Johnson Road, and Broad Street areas and, indeed, all over town. Radios, razor blades, cold water--it's on sale in the street. The sellers who walk around with their wares on their head are called yanas. This name is English: it comes from the vendor's cry, "Here! Now!" ([ya-na]).

An especially popular item for yanas to sell is cloth, whether tie-dye from Guinea and Sierra Leone, colorful prints from Holland and Indonesia (known in Liberia as Fante cloth), or less exotic cloth from elsewhere.

Cloth yanas, like taxi drivers, are most often Guinean. The yana in the dialogue presented here speaks Guinean Liberian English.

(TEXT) The Yana

YANA: Hey, bossman, get good cloth here o.

WIAH: Let me see it.

YANA: Good cloth for good trousers.

WIAH: What! Good trousers?

YANA: Yeah. One-and-a-half yard make trousers for you o, bossman.

WIAH: Dammit. Cloth fine o, but ay! no money.

YANA: I give you for cheap price, bossman, give you for cheap price, cheap price

WIAH: I know.

YANA: One-and-a-half yard.

WIAH: I want to go check in front there first.

YANA: Hey, bossman, come! I say I give you for cheap price. Good-good cloth. Good cloth.

WIAH: Dammit. Cloth fine o, but ay! no money.

YANA: Yeah. Good trousers. You want suit, three yard make suit for you o, bossman.

WIAH: Yeah, I know, but I don't like suit. I want trousers--but hold it first, let me go-come-back.

YANA: Hey, bossman, I say I will help you, I help you.

WIAH: Let me go in front there. When I check there, I will come back.

YANA: Bossman, don't go. Let's talk business. How much you get? How much you get?

WIAH: I know I will buy the thing, but let me go check in front first.

YANA: Bossman, don't go far place. How much you get?

WIAH: No, I want to go buy something first.

YANA: No, bossman, buy this one here first. Sometime, when you go-come, you will not see me here. Bossman, let's sell the thing right here. How much you get?

WIAH: But you say how much first?

YANA: One-and-a-half yard, six dollar, four dollar for one yard. One-and-a-half yard, six dollar.

WIAH: One-and-a-half yard, six dollar?

YANA: Yeah, six dollar. What you say, bossman?

WIAH: That double yard?

YANA: Double yard, that double yard.

WIAH: No, man, you can't tell me this that double yard.

YANA: I sell the thing, I know. I say that double yard. How much you get?

WIAH: What you last price?

YANA: OK. I take fifty cent from there. Pay five-fifty.

WIAH: Five-fifty! What! Carry your cloth, yah.

YANA: Ay, bossman, how much you get? Tell me, tell me, how much you get?

WIAH: I pay four dollar.

YANA: Ay! Allah! Four dollar! No, bossman. From six dollar to four dollar, no, bossman. Pay five dollar. Last price, five dollar. Here, take it.

WIAH: No. I got to go buy something from over there. I just coming from Bassa, I want one trousers, but the money not enough.

YANA: No, pay five dollar. Bossman, last price, pay five dollar.

WIAH: Let me give you four dollar.

YANA: No, bossman.

WIAH: I going in front, man.

YANA: No, bossman. I will help you whole one dollar. Pay five dollar.

WIAH: Since you can't believe me, you can follow me. Let's go to the place. After I fini buying the thing, then you will know.

YANA: No, bossman. Take the thing now. Pay five dollar.

WIAH: My man, I go, yah. I ain't got this kind of money to come pay five dollar.

YANA: Bossman, then make it four-fifty.

WIAH: Four-twenty-five.

YANA: No, bossman, four-fifty. That good cloth this. Pay four-fifty.

WIAH: OK. Four-fifty.

YANA: Here your cloth, yah, bossman. Thank you, yah.

WIAH: OK. See you.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

Bargaining is the medium for most transactions with yanas. That is, the price is negotiated through a series of proposals and counter-proposals. The seller ordinarily puts forth the first price, an amount in excess of what he actually expects to receive. The buyer counters with a much lower figure, a figure less than what he actually expects to pay. Little by little, the two figures--seller's and buyer's--move closer to each other until they meet. The ultimate price is usually closer to the buyer's original price than to the seller's; the seller yields more during the bargaining.

Besides yanas, charlies also bargain. The latter are sellers of African artifacts; they are known for starting with very steep prices and then lowering them dramatically. Bargaining also takes place in the market and in stores but less universally. At the same time, not everyone who moves through the streets selling his or her wares is willing to bargain. For example, waiter market boys usually do not bargain. A waiter market is a rectangular wooden tray containing cigarettes, candies, chewing gum, and the like; these items are usually sold at fixed prices.

bossman: To Americans, this term may seem colonialist or racist. In fact in some contexts, it is used that way. But it is also used in other environments free of its colonialist and racist coloring. For example, one or both participants in bargaining may use it, the person using it trying to establish himself or herself as a supplicant dependent upon the other's generosity.

get good cloth here: I have good cloth here. get means 'to own, to have.' As here, I is often deleted with this verb. Speakers of more standard-like English use got, rather than get.

cloth: Note that, in this dialogue, cloth is usually pronounced [klo] rather than [klɔ]. Many speakers do not distinguish between cloth and clothes.

one-and-a-half yard: The cloth has a set width: ordinarily, it is either single yard or double yard, the former being much narrower than the latter. The two terms do not mean thirty-six and seventy-two inches. One-and-a-half refers to the length of the piece of cloth. One-and-a-half yards of double-yard material or two yards of single-yard material is sufficient to make a pair of trousers for an average-sized Liberian man.

dammit: an exclamation of approval.

cloth fine o, but ay! no money: This construction--a positive statement ending in o, followed by but ay! and a statement which cancels the force of the positive statement--occurs frequently, often with humorous intent. For example:

He shy o, but ay! he can wear dig-my-socks.

'He would be attractive, but that kind of trousers (dig-my-socks) is really out of style.'

Note that, while interest is expressed in the cloth, it is coupled with the statement that the buyer does not have money. Buyers who indicate both that they are interested in an item and that they have money will find it difficult to get sellers to reduce the price.

I want to go check in front there first: I want to go further down the street before I deal with you. The implication of the statement is that the customer wants to see if he can make a better bargain elsewhere. When the potential customer professes indifference to the item at hand, this puts pressure on the seller to come up with an attractive offer.

suit: matching shirt and trousers. This type of suit is popularly called French suit, Guinea suit, swearing-in suit, Higher Heights suit, and Tolbert suit. The first two names are references to the fact that the style was introduced to Liberia from Guinea (Guinea and the Ivory Coast often being called French), and the latter three to the fact that the style was popularized by President Tolbert. (He wore suits of this type

to his inaugurations; thus, the name swearing-in; Higher Heights was a political slogan of his administration.) What Americans call a suit, i.e. trousers and a jacket, is what Liberians call a coat suit. Another type of suit is the lappa suit, worn by a woman and consisting of a lappa (here, a long skirt), a buba (a loose-fitting blouse), and--optionally--a headtie (a piece of cloth wrapped around the head), all made from matching cloth.

I say I will help you: I will give you a reduced price. In other settings, help means to do something specific for a person, such as to give the person money. Thus, "I want for you to help me" is generally a request for money.

let's talk business: Let's talk about the price.

how much you get? How much are you willing to pay?

don't go far place: don't go far. By continually threatening to leave, Wiah is putting pressure on the seller to make an attractive offer.

sometime: perhaps.

but you say how much first?: The prospective buyer is trying to get the seller to state his price first. It is generally to one's advantage to get the other party to be the first to suggest a price.

what you say, bossman?: that's my price; what's yours?

double yard: See the discussion of one-and-a-half yard above.

this that double yard: This cloth is double-yard cloth.

last price: $5.50 is the "first" last price.

carry your cloth: take the cloth away; I'm not interested. If the buyer displays interest, especially in the early stages of bargaining, the seller will be more reluctant to bring his price down.

from six dollar to four dollar, no, bossman: The difference between my first price and your first price is too great; you will have to raise your offer.

Bassa: While this could refer to any place within Grand Bassa County, it usually refers to Buchanan. Frequently, people refer to the county seats of the coastal counties (other than Montserrado) by the name of the county.

the money not enough: I don't have enough money.

last price: $5.00 is the "second" last price.

since you can't believe me: since you don't believe me.

fini: a perfective marker, corresponding, in this context, to have: 'after I have bought the thing.'

then you will know: then you will see that I was telling the truth.

I go, yah: I'm going. Again, as when he told the seller to "carry the cloth" and when he has repeatedly threatened to go elsewhere, the buyer is putting pressure on the seller to make an attractive offer.

I ain't got this kind of money to come pay five dollar: I'm not wealthy enough to be able to pay five dollars for cloth like this.

that good cloth this: this is good cloth.

four-fifty: As often happens, the actual sale price is lower than either of the seller's two "last prices."

UNIT FIVE: THE TAILOR

Once cloth has been purchased, the next step is to take it to a tailor. Again, bargaining is the method by which the price is arrived at.

Tailors, too, are generally Guinean. Thus, this tailor's speech is Guinean Liberian English.

(TEXT) The Tailor

WIAH: What you say, my man?

TAILOR: Oh! What say, bossman?

WIAH: What news?

TAILOR: Nothing bad o.

WIAH: How the business?

TAILOR: Only so-so o. We just here.

WIAH: But it look like yall making good business here today o.

TAILOR: Oh, no business today, man. Whole day, I ain't make no money yet self.

WIAH: Ah! Everybody pack in the shop like this, you say no good business today?

TAILOR: We just sew, we just sew, we no got no money today.

WIAH: You just want to knock my head, that all, Jack.

TAILOR: No, man. But you got anything for me to do for you? Because it rough today, man.

WIAH: Yeah, I want you to sew me one trousers.

TAILOR: Let me see the cloth.

WIAH: Here the cloth.

TAILOR: That how much yard this?

WIAH: That one-and-a-half yard.

TAILOR: Ah. What kind of trousers you want? You want bell-bottom?

WIAH: No, I don't want bell-bottom. This time no bell-bottom in style.

TAILOR: So what kind of bottom you want? You want twenty-two?

WIAH: Yeah, twenty-two all right, and let the trousers cover my shoe small.

TAILOR: Oh, OK. Like this?

WIAH: All right.

TAILOR: How you want the leg to be? It must be tight, or I must loose it small?

WIAH: Let it be free. Sometime I will not get money to sew new trousers.

TAILOR: Like this?

WIAH: All right.

TAILOR: What kind of zipper you want? We must make the long zipper or the short zipper?

WIAH: Just small short zipper.

TAILOR: OK. How much pocket you want?

WIAH: I don't want plenty pocket. Youself you know those rogue here. They can steal man money this time, so I just want one pocket in front here.

TAILOR: You want back pocket too?

WIAH: No, I say, I just want one pocket in front. That all. Yall Monrovia children, they say yall can steal o.

TAILOR: So only the one pocket?

WIAH: Yeah.

TAILOR: OK, OK. I will do it. What about belt? I must make place for belt?

WIAH: Yeah.

TAILOR: OK. What kind of button you want? You want press button or other button must go there?

WIAH: No, I want press button. How much you charge me now?

TAILOR: Anyway, you my customer. Pay seven-fifty for your trousers because I want to sew it good.

WIAH: Ah! You mean to say one trousers, that seven-fifty?

TAILOR: Yeah, but youself you know this time everytime the people charge us for this place. You know how much I pay for this place? One-hundred-and-fifty dollar.

WIAH: But you can't tell me my one trousers will pay the whole shop money.

TAILOR: OK, how much you want to pay?

WIAH: I pay four-fifty.

TAILOR: Ah! No, man. Pay six-fifty.

WIAH: I can't make it.

TAILOR: Then make it six dollar.

WIAH: No, it still too dear. I can only pay four-fifty.

TAILOR: Ah, no! At least put one dollar more. Let's make it five-fifty. Let me help you, make it five-fifty.

WIAH: Ah, Lord. I come from way Bassa because, yall Monrovia tailor them, yall can sew good. But five-fifty? No, I can't make it.

TAILOR: Bossman, make it five-fifty. The way I want to sew this thing, it go look fine.

WIAH: I ain't somebody that got money, ba.

TAILOR: Just put the one dollar there and make it five-fifty.

WIAH: I will pay five dollar.

TAILOR Anyway, I go do it, but don't tell anybody that I sew this thing for five dollar.

WIAH: All right. I will pay advance, but I not making no down payment. Yall Monrovia tailor them, (when person give you,) when person pay all, yall can eat person money.

TAILOR: No, bossman. Pay all one time. You come tomorrow, I will give the trousers to you one time.

WIAH: But when I give you my money, I don't want to hear, "Go-come-back, go-come-back tomorrow" o.

TAILOR: No! I say, when you come tomorrow evening, I will be right here; I will give it to you.

WIAH: I don't want no "go-come, go-come" o.

TAILOR: No, bossman. You see me, I good tailor. Ask all the people here. And when I say, "Come back tomorrow," you come, I give you trousers.

WIAH: What time I must come tomorrow?

TAILOR: Come three. You will meet the trousers ready.

WIAH: OK. I will come sharp three.

TAILOR: Fine.

WIAH: Goodbye, yah.

TAILOR: OK, see you tomorrow, yah.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

Some of the familiar terms of everyday business transactions have different meanings in Liberian English. For example, as in the United States, a customer is one with whom a person does business regularly. But, in Liberia, either party can call the other "customer." That is, if Wiah habitually has his trousers made at this tailor's shop, Wiah can call the tailor his customer.

Also, in Liberia, to make a down payment means 'to pay the entire sum.' The phrase does not carry information as to when the exchange payment was made. That is, if the trousers are ordered on Tuesday and picked up on Wednesday, Wiah could make a down payment (or pay (cash) down) on Tuesday, Wednesday, or the following Saturday--any time at all.

to pay advance means 'to make partial prepayment'; to pay in advance means 'to make total prepayment.'

only so-so o: Even while greetings are being exchanged, the jockeying for advantage with regard to bargaining has already begun. The tailor cannot admit that business is good. Were he to admit it, then Wiah could argue that the tailor did not need much of Wiah's money and, therefore, should not charge Wiah very much.

self: a word which emphasizes the word, phrase, or clause preceding it. The nearest approximation in Standard English to it is 'even.' For example:

The teachers self not serious.	'Even the teachers are not serious about education.'
The man never came self.	'The man didn't even show up.'

everybody pack in the shop like this, you say no good business today?: even with the shop crowded like this, you say that business is not good today?

we just sew, we just sew, we no got no money today: it's true that we're busy, but we haven't made any money all day.

You just want to knock my head: you just want to outwit me. To knock

someone's head is frequently used with regard to bargaining:

I knock that guy head.	'I got the better of that guy in the bargain.'

how much yard: how many yards. Speakers of more standard-like Liberian English use how many.

twenty-two: a reference to the width of the trouser leg. In this style, the leg is twenty-two inches wide--a medium width, neither so wide as bell-bottoms nor so narrow as pistol-legs.

must: In general, Liberian English must corresponds to Standard English 'should':

I must come?	'Should I come?'

It can also be used in making polite requests; its function is roughly that of 'please' in the analogous Standard English sentence:

My ma say you must send small soda, yah.	'My mother asks that you please send her a little soda.'

loose: to loosen, to make loose.

let it be free. Sometime I will not get money to sew new trousers: Don't make it too tight; it may be a long time before I can afford to buy trousers again.

rogue: thief. rogue is by far the most widely used term in Liberia for any type of thief: burglar, pickpocket, or robber. rogue is also a verb, meaning 'to steal'.

yall Monrovia children: The second person plural pronoun is often used in terms of address when more than one person is being addressed. Thus, to one person, one would say, "You boy, please come," while to more than one, one would say, "Yall boys, yall please come."

children: As here, children can have a broader use in Liberian English than in American English. In Kru, the word for child, jṹ, can refer to all those under the age of thirty or thirty-five. Apparently, this wider use has entered Liberian English. children is also used in Liberia to apply to 'students,' even at the high-school and college level. Thus, one speaks of the Tubman High children and the Cuttington children. In general, the informal Liberian term for a pre-adolescent is pekin.

press button: a snap button. It is called press because one presses it shut.

you want press button or other button must go there?...No: In Liberian English, a disjunctive question (one containing or) may be answered by yes or no. As a general rule, the yes or no is with reference to the second disjunctive element. Thus, had the answer to the question in the text been yes, it would have meant 'I want some other kind of button.'

There are exceptions to this principle. The one most commonly encountered occurs when a person, especially a host, is offering something to someone else, for example, "Will you take some bread or biscuits?" Here, no means 'neither'. Yes means 'I would like something.' (Some people would feel it to be bad manners to specify what the host must provide.)

everytime: regularly; here, once a month.

but you can't tell me my one trousers will pay the whole shop money: but you don't mean to say that you expect that the amount you will charge me to fix my trousers will equal a whole month's rent.

I can't make it: I can't pay that amount.

dear: expensive. A British usage.

I come from way Bassa: I come from all the way to Bassa. The use of way emphasizes the distance involved.

the way I want to sew this thing: the way I will sew this thing.

go: will. The use of go as a future marker is restricted to those furthest away from Standard English.

don't tell anybody that I sew this thing for five dollar: This is an often-used formula. Its intent is to re-assure the client that he has made a good deal (whether he has or not).

eat...money: to misuse the money. That is, to spend the money without sewing the trousers. eat frequently means 'to embezzle,' and, less frequently, 'to use (something, especially money) for other purposes than that for which it was intended.'

one time: right away.

I don't want to hear, "go-come-back, go-come-back tomorrow": I don't want to have to keep coming here again and again and every time be told, "Come back tomorrow." go-come can also be used (rather than go-come-back).

tomorrow evening: tomorrow afternoon.

you will meet the trousers ready: when you get here, the trousers will be ready for you. meet has an expanded range of uses in Liberian English, as the following examples display:

I met them gone.	'They weren't home.'
I met the book here.	'The book was here when I arrived.'
The rain met me on the way.	'It started to rain while I was en route.'

sharp three: three o'clock sharp.

UNIT SIX: LIBERIAN CUISINE

Liberia's staple food is rice. After rice, cassava and cassava products--fufu, dumboy, and gegba--are the most frequently eaten foods. A variety of stews, soups, and sauces are eaten with the rice or cassava. While many of these foods are identified with particular ethnic groups--cassava leaf with the Vai, torborgee with the Lorma, palm butter with the Kru and Grebo, gegba with the Mano and Gio, and so forth--all the foods are widely eaten in Liberia and are not limited to individual groups.

When Liberians cook, they usually cook enough to feed several people. This is a reflection of the size of Liberian households, which are generally larger than American ones. It is also a reflection of Liberian hospitality. Guests, whether expected or unexpected, are invited to share the food. People who arrive while a meal is in progress are also called to join in.

Certain ingredients are found in virtually every Liberian dish: onions, salt, hot peppers, bouillon cubes, and some type of palm oil. The types of meat or fish used depend on what is available.

Liberian cooking is done to taste and by sight. A good Liberian cook adjusts the dish to the ingredients at hand. How long something cooks is often a function of some visual cue: until the water dries up, until the leaves are slightly brown, or something like that. The recipe presented here is a Liberian recipe: as such, it relies upon such cues.

The recipe is for palaver sauce, a dish made from a kind of leaf. The dish is widely eaten in West Africa. It is not known how the dish got its name or if there is any connection between the name of the dish and palaver meaning 'discussion, argument.' The name of the dish goes back at least as far as the early nineteenth century; a sea captain visiting West Africa recorded the name in his diary then.

The recipe given for palaver sauce can be used for other greens as well.

(TEXT) Palaver Sauce

People got plenty way to cook something. This one got different way, the other one got different way, myself I got my different way again.

Let's say palaver sauce. Some people beat the greens in mortar. Other people cut it with knife in small-small piece. Me part, I rub the green in my hand, move it around like this, sometime I put small soda, put it in the pot, put it on the fire, and be stirring it with a spoon till it cut in small-small piece just like with knife.

We got burnt oil palaver sauce and raw oil palaver sauce. Burnt oil palaver sauce, that the fry one. To make the other one now, the raw oil own, you take the green, you rub it. Let's say you take three bunch of green. You rub them. You put them in the pot. You put the pot on the fire. You stir it. You be stirring it, stirring it, stirring it till it be little bit brown, then you put water on it. For three bunch of green, I can use four or three cup of water. It all depend on the bunch. If it be big-big, sometime I will add four cup of water.

All right. You put the water on it. If you want, you put boney, you put crawfish, you put dry fish, you put dry meat--any kind of meat you want, you put it there. You put all those thing there. What I have, that what I will put inside. If I got more, I will put it inside.

Then, I put onion, tomato--one cup like that. I put salt--sometime that one tablespoon, sometime two like that. Chicken soup--I put two or three inside. And pepper--just how much you want, you put it inside. One like me, I can't eat plenty pepper, so I just put fifteen inside like that.

The soup will be on the fire boiling. Time the water get dry on it, then you put the raw oil inside. You will put something like two Stockton bottle like that. When you put the oil, it get dry, it fry good, then you take it down. You finish.

Now, if you want to make it with burnt oil, you put the oil in the pot and burn it. If you want the oil to burn little bit, you can use (some) sometime two Stockton bottle. If you want to burn it more, turn white little bit, you got to use more oil. All right, you burn the oil. If you got raw fish or meat, you fry it, before you put the palaver sauce inside.

Me part, time I be making the burnt-oil own, I can cut the green with knife. It can be easy like that. I cut it with knife, I put it in the oil.

When it fry good, then you put water on it. The water will not be plenty like how it can be with the raw-oil palaver sauce because, if you fini frying it, it will not be hard to done again. You will just put one cup of water or one-and-a-half like that. Then you put the fried fish inside, the onion, the tomato, the salt, the pepper, the chicken soup. The water you put on it, it will get dry. When you take it from the fire, it finish. (END OF TEXT)

NOTES

me part: a variant of my part. Both mean 'as for me.'

rub the green in my hand, move it around like this: knead the leaves.

be [illegible]ring: be shows repeated action. It can be used in imperatives:

[illegible] checking on the fire. 'Keep checking on the fire.'

just like with knife: as if it had been cut with a knife.

burnt oil palaver sauce and raw oil palaver sauce: the names are in reference to the type of palm oil used. Burnt oil is partially or wholly clarified oil; raw oil is unclarified.

the fry one: the one in which the oil, the greens, and--if present--the fresh meat and fish are fried.

the raw oil own: the variety using raw oil.

four or three cup: The larger number is very often given before the smaller number in constructions like this.

cup: approximately fifteen ounces; cup is also the standard market unit for rice.

it all depend on the bunch: It depends on the size of the bunches.

boney: small dried fish.

dry fish . . . dry meat: dried fish . . . dried meat.

what I have: whatever I have.

inside: here, in the sauce.

if I got more: if I have a lot.

tomato--one cup like that: tomato refers to 'tomato paste.' cup can mean 'tin can'--and does so here. The size referred to is the small can, approximately two-and-a-half ounces.

like that: here, approximately.

chicken soup: bouillon cubes. Regardless of the flavor of the cubes, they are called chicken soup.

I can't eat plenty pepper: Palates vary (and so do peppers). What someone who has been eating pepper all of his or her life considers to be "not plenty" may be--from a newcomer's point of view--so strong that the latter is unable to eat the food.

time the water dry on it: when the water dries up.

two Stockton bottle: Palm oil is usually sold in the market in used liquor bottles: the small Stockton's gin bottles, stout bottles, Heineken's beer bottles, and the large Club beer bottles. A Stockton's bottle holds six ounces.

when you put the oil, it get dry, it fry good, then you take it down: Notice that each of the first three clauses in the sentence ends with a rise in pitch: that marks each of the clauses as being part of the introductory subordination. That is, it is a signal that the main clause is yet to come.

burn: clarify.

palaver sauce: the greens used in making palaver sauce are themselves called palaver sauce.

if you fini frying it: once you have fried it. This clause provides another example of fini acting as a perfective marker, i.e. corresponding to 'have.'

to done: to get done. While done is used with reference to cooking, it is not widely used in other contexts, finish being used instead. The Liberian equivalent of 'Woman's work is never done' would be "Woman's work can't finish."

There is a difference in meaning between "The soup done" and "The soup finish." The former means 'the cooking of the soup has been completed,' but the latter means 'there is no more soup.'

fried fish: Also, the meat is added here. (After the fish and meat are fried, they are set aside. They are not added to the greens until after the water has been added.)

UNIT SEVEN: FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is found universally. Each culture develops friendships in particular ways.

In Liberia, the word "friend" has a number of uses. It can mean 'peer, one's social equal' as in

One man kill his friend with knife on Waterside.

'One man stabbed another man to death at Waterside.'

It can also refer to newly made acquaintances, as when small children say to a Volunteer upon seeing him or her for the first time,

You my friend, yah.

Of course, "friend" has its more usual meaning as well. The texts which are presented here explore that meaning in its Liberian context.

(FIRST TEXT) Definition of a Friend

A friend is a person who help you when you in need of something, and you people move together, sometime eat together, almost do everything together.

But we got so many kind of friend. Some friend, they only like you when you having money and some friend like you with money or without money. That's the kind of friend I consider to be my real friend.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

a friend is a person: In constructions of this sort--where the copula joins two full noun phrases (as opposed to pronouns)--it cannot be deleted.

move together: go places together, be seen together.

having: Some verbs which do not ordinarily take the -ing form in Standard English do so in Liberian English:

That man having one car.	'That man has a car.'
I been knowing him since.	'I have known him for a long time.'

(SECOND TEXT) When Girls Are Friends

You can see boy and boy or girl and girl being good friend in Liberia, but you don't find girl and boy being friend all that much. If you find it, they loving or trying to be loving. When a girl and girl be friend, they can be open to each other. When I say open, I mean they willing to share their problem, their secret between each other. And they share thing. You will always find the two of them together.
(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

they loving: they are lovers. A sexual relationship is implied.

(THIRD TEXT) Best Friend

And we got best friend, too. As for me, I got one friend that I call my best friend because we do everything together. When he get money today, when I tell him I broke, if he get four dollar, he will share it equal, two dollar, two dollar. If he tell me, say, he broke, and I got five dollar, I will share it, two-fifty, two-fifty.

He met me in our workingplace and we just start our friendship from there. First time, he was living to his auntie place. Nearly every day, I use to go there, and he use to come to my house, too. If I go to his house, he will carry me halfway to my house, and I will bring him to his house, so, sometime we would just be going all around. Then he move from his auntie place, and he stopping to my place now. We all living together. The only thing we don't do is to change clothes together, but we eat together, we drink together, we do everything together. If the man find out I loving a girl on this side, he will come, too, and love to a girl on that side, so two of us go there together. He ain't want to leave me when he going out

or when I going out--he ain't want to leave me. I call that man my best friend.

(END OF THIRD TEXT)

NOTES

two dollar, two dollar: two dollars each. In Unit Three, the use of reduplication to intensify an adjective was noted. When used with number or amounts, the reduplication means 'each.' For example:

She selling the orange five cent-five cent.	'She's selling the oranges five cents apiece.'
Divide the plum two-two.	'Give each person two mangoes.'

(one-one can also mean 'a little bit.'

I can speak Gio one-one.)

tell me, say: Say ordinarily signals a direct quotation, as in

I ask him, say, "What you abuse the boy like that for?"	'I asked him, "Why did you insult the boy like that?"'

However, say frequently appears with tell even when an indirect rather than a direct quote follows.

first time: at first.

if I go to his house: In general, past habitual and past repeated actions are expressed by a present-tense verb.

carry me halfway: escort me part of the way home. It is customary for a host to escort guests part of the way to their homes. It sometimes happens, particularly among close friends, that the one being carried will in turn walk his or her host part of the way back to the host's home.

going all around: here, going up and down.

stopping to my place: living at my place. That the arrangement is temporary is not necessarily implied by the use of this phrase.

all: All can refer to 'two.'

All my parent living.	'Both of my parents are living.'
All my eye were turning.	'I was dizzy.'

All two is also common.

to change clothes together: to wear each other's clothing. The practice is not uncommon among friends.

loving a girl . . . love to a girl: both phrases imply a sexual relationship.

on this side: in one part of town.

on that side: that is, in the same part of town.

two of us: the two of us.

leave: be separated from.

(FOURTH TEXT) Bad Friend

We consider some friend that bad friend because their way of acting to people. And some of them come around you, you know, friendly with you because they know you got something, and they don't have, and they want you to help them. And after you help them for some time, they will just move. They will not care to come around you anymore. We consider that as bad friend.

Even one of my friend, that he and myself were together before in Bassa, were friendly, going to the same school. Even he was working for money before me. He was working with LAMCO, and they fire him because he was teaching one guy on the job. Then he came down Monrovia, he met me here. When he met me here, I was working. When he came, he say, "My man, I looking for job." He was stopping with his brother, but everyday he use to come to my house. At the end of every month, I make sure I give him ten dollar. And (every) everyday he come to my house to eat. Sometime I try hard and pay his way to go back home. I even took my key and give it to him. I never knew that guy got job. He took my sneakers, my socks, and my key and went. I don't see him for six month.

The seventh month own, I saw him on Broad Street. He say, "Oh!"

I say, "Oh, my man, for long time, I don't see you here, man."

He say, "Oh, my man, I working here now o, but I will try and bring

your sneakers."

I say, "Oh, my man, never mind. That sneaker business you talking? (I de-) I thought you gone back Bassa. That the thing I was worrying. You see. And even my baby ma always asking about you, and I say I can't even see you, so I been looking for you, man."

He say, "Oh, my man, I will try and bring your sneakers. I will buy one new one when the month end, when I take pay. I will bring it to the house there, man, because I, I ain't got no money now. Maybe by the end of this month, they will pay me."

Say, "OK."

From that time, the man don't come to my house. If I see him, I see him on the street. You see, I won't consider that as good friend. To me, he a bad friend.

(END OF FOURTH TEXT)

NOTES

some friend that bad friend: some friends are bad friends.

because their way of acting: because of their way of acting.

come around you: come to visit you.

they don't have: they don't have anything. Some verbs which must have an expressed object in Standard English need not have one in Liberian English: attend, have, enjoy, and others.

help: Here, again, help means to do something specific for a person, probably to give the person money.

move: leave; here, stop coming to visit.

care to: choose to.

one of my friend, that he and myself were together before in Bassa: In Standard English, there are certain restrictions placed on relative clauses. Take the sentence,

I bought the cow from that man and his brother.

It is not acceptable Standard English to say

> The man whom and his brother I bought the cow from is here for his money.

Also, in Standard English, one does not put a "copy pronoun" into the relative clause in place of the head noun. One can't say:

> The man who he sold me the cow is here for his money.

In some Liberian languages--among them Bassa and Kru--it is possible to join the head noun to another noun in the relative clause by a conjunction and it is possible to insert a copy pronoun. Liberian English also permits these, as the sentence in the text illustrates.

LAMCO: Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company, the largest iron-ore producer in Liberia.

they fire him because he was teaching one guy on the job: Unauthorized training of individuals not employed by the company is a violation of company policy.

come down Monrovia: With verbs of motion, a preposition (between the verb and the location) is often optional:

> I going (to) Robertsport. 'I'm going to Robertsport.'

he met me here: I was living here when he came to town.

to go back home: to go back to his brother's.

my key: the key to my house.

the seventh month own: in the seventh month.

worrying: worrying about.

my baby ma: the mother of my child (from "baby's ma"). It specifies a relationship as being less permanent than if the woman were called my wife but more serious than if she were referred to as my girl friend or my love one. The mother of a young child is often referred to by others as baby ma, for example:

> Yall, please dress; give the baby ma chance to sit down good.
>
> 'Please move over to make room for the woman with the baby.'

Say, "OK": I said, "OK." When dialogue is being narrated, saying say signals a change in speaker. Thus, in the dialogue here, after the initial he say and I say, the speaker could have marked every change of speaker simply by saying say each time:

> I saw him on Broad Street, he say, "Oh!"

I say, "Oh, my man, for long time I don't see you here, man."

Say, "Oh, my man, I working here now o, but I will try and bring your sneakers."

Say, "Oh, my man, never mind . . . so I been looking for you, man."

Say, "Oh, my man, I will try and bring your sneakers . . . Maybe by the end of this month, they will pay me.

Say, "OK."

The texts which have been presented describe friendship--and the abuse of friendship--between peers. A striking characteristic--to an American--of such friendships is the extent to which friends share their material possessions. When a relationship is between people of different social rank, it is somewhat different. (It should be remembered that the pecking order of Liberian society--based on age, wealth, and position--is quite well-defined.) The sharing of material wealth is present in these relations, too, but it is not wholly reciprocal. The friend who is better off gives more materially than he or she receives. (Often, the friend who is less well off will make specific requests for financial or material assistance. This is permitted in Liberian culture.)

Peace Corps Volunteers are often assumed to be well-to-do. They are also older than many who wish to be friends with them, particularly students. (Even when PCV's are not older than students by virtue of greater age, they are nonetheless considered as being older by virtue of their education.) In situations where a PCV is perceived to have wealth and higher social rank, he or she is expected to share some of that wealth, just as a Liberian of comparable status and affluence would be expected to. This may well go against the ideas about friendship which the PCV has brought from the States: the Volunteer feels exploited and feels that his or her efforts to be friendly are being taken advantage of. (Indeed, sometimes they are.) If the Volunteer rejects requests out of hand, the Volunteer appears mean.

Balancing Liberian and American notions of friendship between people of different status is made easier by acquiring polite ways of declining requests. "I will try" is often a good answer. It suggests that in theory one is willing to be of help but that in practice the help will probably unavailable. In some contexts, "next time" is also acceptable. These formulas have in common with other polite but effective responses that the person making the request has not lost face: the request has been rejected, not the person making it.

Strong friendships in Liberia--between Liberians and between Liberians and expatriates--do not hinge upon the transfer of material possessions. Often this is characteristic of a strong friendship, but it is never a precondition.

UNIT EIGHT: PLATTING HAIR

Intricate hair styles have become a part of Liberian women's fashion. Most of the styles involve the use of one of two braiding techniques, country plat or corn row. Variety results from the different ways in which the braids are arranged.

Platting hair is more easily done than described. The best way to learn how to plat is by platting--with someone to guide you, of course.

(TEXT) Country Plat, Bohnswe, and Dogear

We got what we call country plat. If you want to fix it, you take three strand of hair. The one on the left, you cross it over the one in the center, you carry it between the other two so now that it in the center. Then you take the one on the right, you cross it over the one in the center, you carry it between the other two so that it now in the center. Then, you take the one that on the left now, cross it over, and just keep doing like that. That country plat. For corn row, you can be crossing under, not over.

With country plat and corn row, we got plenty different style--like bohnswe, dogear, respond, upstream, downstream, snake, umbrella.

If you want to comb bohnswe, you first part the hair from the first ear to the next ear. Then you start making small rows from the center of the head. Now you get two part of the hair, the back part and the front part. Start with the front part, start parting from the center of the hair coming in front. Then you can comb, using country plat. When you be combing, let all the plat meet in the center. Do the same with the back.

Time you fini combing the hair, all the plat must be in the center. You can put it together, tie it with rubber band. But if the hair be long, you can take one plat of the hair and tie it around the other, using hairpin or hairclip. We call the style Bohnswe.

For dogear, part the hair in the center, starting from the front. And then you just comb, make it into small-small plat, and then comb it down to the ear. The plats suppose to meet on top of the ear. You got one to-do by all the ear. Time you fini combing, you can use rubber band or one strand of the hair to hold it. That one, that the one they call dogear. (END OF TEXT)

NOTES

country: As an adjective, country is widely used to identify traditional and indigenous items and practices (and thereby to oppose them to their imported (kwi) counterparts): country chicken, country cloth, country medicine, country money, country oil, country soap, country soda, country tobacco, and many others. (For a discussion of the implications of using country with reference to individuals, see Unit Twelve.)

the one on the left. . . you carry it between the other two: the strand on the left, you pass between the one in the center and the one on the right.

plenty different style: In addition to these styles which use country plat or corn row, there are several styles which do not use them: Nigerian plat, Merican plat, chicken poo-poo, Afro, curly Afro, shag, and others.

bohnswe: The origin of this name is not known.

comb: braid.

all the plat must be in the center: The individual plats are arranged like spokes of a wheel, with the loose ends of all the plats meeting in the center (the hub).

you can put it together: combine the ends of all the plats.

small-small plat: that is, the individual braids are to be small.

on top of the ear: just above the ear.

one to-do by all the ear: one cluster of plats by each ear. to-do is a word substituted for a name not known or temporarily forgotten. It corresponds to American English 'thingamajig' or 'whatchamacallit,' but it differs from these words in that it can also be used as a verb in the same way:

You must not forget to to-do the thing.

UNIT NINE: WHAT DID JOHN SAY?

One of the most popular features of Focus, a Monrovia newspaper published on Thursdays, is the comic strip, What Did John Say? Created by the editor of Focus, O. Eugene Shaw, and drawn by Reggie Townsend, Jr., the strip comments on current events and on life in Monrovia in general.

Adding to the strip's popularity is the fact that all the characters--the feckless John, the matriarchal Ma Musu, and all the others--speak Monrovia English. A modified phonetic spelling is used in presenting their speech.

To find out what John said, it is necessary to read the strip aloud. Remember the following things about the pronunciation of Liberian English:

1) Syllable-final nasal consonants (m, n, and ng) are most often not pronounced. The preceding vowel is nasalized, but the consonant itself is not sounded.

2) Diphthongs are often reduced, the second element disappearing.

3) Standard English [I] (as in bit) and [ey] (as in bait) are both pronounced [e] in Liberian English. [e] is written ay in What Did John Say?.

The following Liberian orthographic conventions are used:

ah is [a], the vowel in got.

ee is [i], the vowel in me.

or or oh is [ɔ], the vowel in caught.

eh is [ɛ], the vowel in bet.

ay is [e], the vowel in may.

Nasalization is indicated by placing an n after the vowel, e.g. kahn, 'come.' (When a vowel is nasalized because the syllable begins with a nasal consonant, the marking of the nasalization on the vowel is optional, e.g. mahn/mah, 'my.')

The episodes of What Did John Say? appearing below and in subsequent units have been provided through the courtesy of Focus.

(In the rewriting of What Did John Say? in Standard English spelling, the underlining corresponds to the way the characters in the strip "pronounce" the words.)

I. what did John say ?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

1) JOHN: Give me ten cent groundpeas.

2) SELLER: Here you are, my son.

JOHN: Thank you, ma!

3) JOHN: I be jigger! What kind of thing this here? First time ten cent groundpea could fill you stomach, but now it can't even fit in your hand. Monrovia spoiling for true.

ten cent groundpeas: ten cents' worth of peanuts.

I be jigger: I'll be damned. A British expression.

first time: at first.

fit in your hand: fill your hand.

Early in 1980, Lone Star, the Liberian football team, went to Mexico for three weeks of training. However, in their first match after returning home, they were defeated by Ghana's national team, Black Star, 2-0. Here is John's advice:

II.

what did John say ?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

AH SAAAYYYY!! LUN STAH NAHN MESSUP AGIN. NEEN WUF FON TRU-TRU, NAY, ENH LOOKA OR DA MONNIN GONNAN SPEN TO SEN DEM TO MESSECO.
YOUN NO LUN STAH STAY GAN LON WAY TO GO ENH? GHANA PA, DEY CAN SPEN-OH ON DEEZ FOBOH BISNAY ENH DEY NAHN TREEN HOE YEH.
MAN WAY YAH! LUN STAH DEEN PLAY LIKE DEY WON COMIN FROM NO MESSECO. NES TAHN GONNAN NEE TO SEN DEN UP RAYWAH TO EE SON KAYSAWAH ENH FUFU. DEN DEY WAY PLAY BETTEN BOH.

1) JOHN: I say! Lone Star na mess up again. They ain't worth for true. Two-nil, and look at all the money government spend to send them to Mexico.

2) JOHN'S FRIEND: You don't know Lone Star still got long way to go, enh? Ghana part, they can spend-o on their football business. Ehn't they na train whole year?

3) JOHN: Man, wait, yah. Lone Star, they ain't play like they were coming from no Mexico. Next time government need to send them up river to eat some cassava and fufu, then they will play better ball.

na: a perfective marker corresponding, in this case, to has.

they ain't worth: they are not worth anything.

two-nil: two-nothing, the score of the match.

Ghana part, they can spend-o on their football business: As for Ghana, the government spends liberally on its football team.

Lone Star, they ain't play like they were coming from no Mexico: Lone Star didn't play as if they had gone anywhere to train.

next time government need to send them up river to eat some cassava and fufu: the next time the government wants to send them somewhere to train, they should send them up the Saint Paul River to eat some cassava and fufu. The settlements just above Monrovia on the river--Millsburg, Arthington, Clay Ashland, and others--are known for cassava production and consumption. fufu is 'a thick dough made from pounded and fermented cassava.'

III. what did John say?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

JOHN PREPARED THE INGREDIENTS FOR THE PALM BUTTER AND AS IT WAS COOKING ON THE STOVE...
AH NO DAH PAHM BOTTA WAH BE TOO SWEE. LEMME TIS PEESA DEI MEAT SEFF BEFO MA KAHN.
SSSS... DEI COW FO HAH BOT IF AH CHU IT FAS-FAS, IT WAY NAH BOIN MAH MUFF.
JOHN
UM!
JOHN, AH TOE YOU WEN AH COR YOU, YOU MOH ANSOR ME "YES MA" AND NOT "UM". EHN DA WEH AH TOE YOU?
UM!

1) JOHN: I know the palm butter will be too sweet. Let me taste piece of the meat self before Ma come.

2) JOHN: Ssss--the cow foot hot but if I chew it fast-fast, it will not burn my mouth.

MA MUSU: John!

JOHN: Um!

3) MA MUSU: John, I told you when I call you, you must answer me, "Yes, Ma," and not "Um." Ehn't that what I told you?

JOHN: Um!

palm butter: the thick, oily gravy strained from the pounded pulp of the palm nut. When mixed with pepper and meat, it makes a much-relished sauce to serve on rice.

too sweet: very delicious. As noted in Unit Three, too need not imply excess. Thus, "You too fat" can mean 'You're very fat'; while this could be meant as a criticism, it is more often meant as a compliment.

See if you can figure out what John said. You may not be able to get every word, but you should be able to get some of what he and Ma Musu are saying to each other. In trying to determine what they are saying, remember to read their comments aloud. Some hints are given below. (The answers are given at the end of the unit.)

1) whes: what's
   da: that
   enh: ehn (a question word)
   way: with
   bor: boy

2) pa: pot
   dei: the
   or wreh: all right
   enh: and

3) ley: the
   if-fay: if it
   (chew means 'to eat.')
   jumper: jump up
   eelay: eat it

IV. what did John say ?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr

*See page 162a for typewritten version of above for clearer reading.

*Retyped from page 162 (for clearer reading). IV. WHAT DID JOHN SAY?

First Panel:

WHEN THE PALM BUTTER WAS
COOKING, JOHN STOLE A PIECE
OF MEAT. JUST THEN MA MU-
SU CALLED HIM.

JOHN WHES DA IN YOU MUFF. DA MAH
MEE YOU FINI STEELING ENH. WEH
WRON WAY YOU YOU BOR?

Second Panel:

MAH WEN AH OPEN DEI PA TO SEE
IF DEI PAHY BOTTOR WOR OR
WREH DEI MEE WOR JES JUMPIN
UP ENH DAHN.

Third Panel:

MAH AH TOE LEY MEE IF-FAY
JUMPER ONE MO TAHN AH WAY
EELAY. DAH WEH HAPPIN MAH.
DEI MEE DISOBAY ME SO AH
CHEW IT.

Try again to see what John said. (The answers are given at the end of the unit.)

1) mahn: my

dei har tahn Sadorday monnee hyear: ,this hard-time Saturday morning here.

2) wheh: white tor: talk

wohn: want hah: how

3) doe: those

da kanna way: that kind of way

jelleh: just like

poe: poor

dein: they ain't

goo goo: good-good

V.

what did John say ?

K-POW, K'POW-KPOW! KPOW, KPOW, K'POW!
JOHNNN! JOHN KANN SEE WHO DA NAKIN ON MAHN FROM DOE DEI HAR TAHN SADORDAY MOHNEE HYEAR.
MA, DA ONE PEACE COE WHEH MAN, SAY HE WOHN TOE TO YOU.
AH SAAAYY! JOHN. HAH YOU NOE DA PEACE COE MAN. DA WEH HE TOE YOU?
MA YOU NOE HAH DOE PEACE COE PEEPO : AH DRESS DA KANNA WAY, JELLEH DEY SO DOE DEIN GAH MONEE TO BAH GOO GOO CLOSE

Again, try to see what John said. (Again, the answers are at the end of the unit.)

1) Rally Tahn Mahkay: Rally Time Market

bah: buy

les: let's

sontin: something

peechor: picture (movie)

oh: o

2) reenin: rainy

3) youn: you ain't

monin: money

saw: salt

maykay: make it

tahn: times

wes: worse

bra: bra (friend)

VI. what did John say ?

created by o. eugene snaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

JOHN, KAHN GO TO RALLY TAHN MAH KAY ENH BAH SONTIN FOH ME TO COOK YAH! ENH DON'T STAY OR BAY ON
OK
YEAH MA! LOOK MAN-MAN AN SEE YOU YAH! KAHN FOH ME LES GO PEECHOR SATURDAY YOU HYEAH.
DIS REENIN SEESIN DISNAY TOO RUFF OH.
JOHN YOUN WAF DEI SAW YOU EAT HAH YOU STAY LON, SO ? ENH WEN HAPPIN TO YOU RAIN OAT ?
OH MA, AH PAWN BA COAT LAS WEE. DEI TAHN TOO RUF FRA EWAY WHERE YOU GO NO MONIN. ENH DEI REENIN SEESIN NA MAYKAY WES.

The Answers:

IV.

1) MA MUSU: What's that in you mouth? That my meat you fini stealing, enh? What wrong with you, you boy?

2) JOHN: Ma, when I open the pot to see if the palm butter was all right, the meat was just jumping up and down.

3) JOHN: Ma, I told the meat if it jump up one more time, I will eat it. That what happen, Ma. The meat disobey me, so I chew it.

V.

1) MA MUSU: John! John, come see who that knocking on my front door this hard-time Saturday morning here.

2) JOHN: Ma, that one Peace Corps white man say he want talk to you.

MA MUSU: I say, John. How you know that Peace Corps man. That what he told you?

3) JOHN: Ma, you know how those Peace Corps people can dress that kind of way, just like they so poor they ain't got money to buy good-good clothes.

I say: When the pronunciation of say is drawn out, it can indicate skepticism.

that kind of way: This is always a vaguely but unmistakably negative comment. A similar phrase is some kind of way; it is also vague but tends to mean 'unreasonable, ill-tempered.'

That boy too some kind of way. 'That boy is hard to get along with.'

The criticism of Peace Corps Volunteers which Liberians voice most frequently is of the slovenly appearance of some Volunteers.

VI.

1) MA MUSU: John, come go to Rally Time Market and buy something for me to cook, yah! And don't stay all day o.

JOHN: Yeah, Ma! Look, my man, I see you, yah! Come for me, let's go picture Saturday, you hear?

JOHN"S FRIEND: OK.

2) JOHN: This rainy season business too rough o.

3) MA MUSU: John, you ain't worth the salt you eat. How you stay long so? And what happen to you rain coat?

JOHN: Oh, ma, I pawn the coat last week. The time too rough, bra. Everywhere you go, no money. And the rainy season na make it worse.

Rally Time Market: a Monrovia market--on U.N. Drive across from the Barclay Training Center.

I see you: I'll see you.

how you stay long so?: Why did you stay so long?

UNIT TEN: GAMES

National Pastimes

Football (soccer) is the number one sport in Liberia and in all of Africa. Though basketball is on the rise and volleyball has its devotees and kickball has caught on with schoolgirls, football matters most to Liberians. School teams, Monrovia football clubs, and--especially--the national team, Lone Star, command intense loyalty from their fans.

Besides being interested in athletics, many Liberians are also avid players of card and board games. For a long time, whist was the most popular card game. (Its most remarkable feature was the elaborate set of hand signals by which partners exchanged information.) For the most part, whist has been supplanted by spades. Six-six, a game for two, is also widely played.

There are several popular board games: Checkers is perhaps the most widely played. While the principles of checkers as played in Liberia are the same as in checkers as played in America, the Liberian board has more squares, and each player has more men. Additionally, there are some rules (regarding the movement of kings (called rich kings in Liberia)) which Liberian checkers players have in common with rural Southern U.S. blacks but which are different from the rules of other American players.

Besides checkers, snakes and ladders and ludo are played extensively. Scrabble is popular among students, especially college students.

A game found all along the West African coast (and in East Africa as well) is found here, too. Called by a multitude of names--oware in Ghana, sakwe in Lorma, ta in Grebo, to name a few--the game is played with seeds and a special small table with two rows of six holes. The game is generally associated with old men--perhaps because they are its most skillful players.

Children's Games

The rules for two children's games are presented here. The first, Freetown ball, is a variant of football popular among pre-adolescents and adolescents. The second, knockfoot, is the clapping and stamping game played by girls in every corner of the country.

(FIRST TEXT) Freetown Ball

In Freetown Ball, yall divide, yall make team. The other team go to the other goal, the other team go to the other goal. Before yall start the game, one man from your team suppose to kick the ball from your goal.

When yall kick the ball from your goal, you won't follow the ball till the man touch the ball before you check on him. Soon as the man touch the ball, then you check on him. And no foul business.

When yall play play, the ball go behind the goal. When the ball go behind the goal, yall play because, once it ain't pass through the goal post, yall can still play. Yall play play. Yall can take the ball from behind the goal and still score.

When yall play play, you touch the ball with your hand, you take the ball to your goal, you kick over. If you know the man coming score on you, you fight hard to touch the ball with your hand. Because if they kick the ball in the goal but you na touch it with your hand before it pass in the goal, that not goal because you na touch it with your hand so it not in play. You suppose to kick over. Stand in your goal and kick now. Yall will play play till one side win the other side. If no other team, yall can still change goal and start again. But the winning score, that either four or six goal to move. That how we play Freetown Ball.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

divide: form sides.

the other team go to the other goal, the other team go the other goal: one team goes to one goal, and the other team goes to the other goal. Standard English 'one. . . the other' is ordinarily expressed in Liberian English by "the other. . . the other."

before yall start the game, one man from your team suppose to kick from your goal: to start the game, one of the players kicks the ball from his goal.

you won't follow the ball till the man touch the ball before you check on him: you won't pursue the ball until your opponent touches it; then you go to him and play him close. Constructions in which before introduces the final clause are common. As a general rule of Liberian English, the order of clauses in a sentence reflects the temporal sequence of the events they

describe. In Standard English, one may say either

'After you come back here, I will go home.'
or 'I will go home after you come back here.'

In Liberian English, this would most commonly be expressed by

When you come back here before I will reach home.

Sometimes, in elliptical constructions, before appears as the final element of a sentence:

I was suppose to go by air today but no plane. The people say Monday before.	'I was supposed to fly today but no plane will come today. The people say that there will be one Monday.' (Monday will come before the plane does.)

and no foul business: No fouls are called. Anything goes.

when yall play play, the ball go behind the goal: as play progresses, it may happen that the ball goes behind the goal.

when the ball go behind the goal, yall play: when the ball goes behind the goal (without going through it), play continues.

yall can take the ball from behind the goal: you bring the ball out from behind the goal (but you can't kick the ball through the goal from behind it).

when yall play play, you touch the ball with your hand: while you are playing, if you touch the ball with your hand.

you kick over: that is, you kick just as you did at the beginning of the game.

coming score: about to score. coming is the incipient-future auxiliary; that is, its use signals that the action described is about to take place.

It coming rain.	'It's about to rain.'
I coming go, man.	'I'm getting ready to go, man.'

fight hard: try hard.

you na touch it: you have touched it.

because if they kick the ball in the goal but you na touch it with your hand before it pass in the goal, that not goal because you na touch it with your hand so it not in play: the moment you touch the ball with

your hand, it ceases to be in play. In this sentence there are two instances of na [na] and two of not [ná]. Can you hear the difference in tone? not is high in pitch; na is not.

win the other side: defeat the other side.

if no other team: if no other team is waiting for the chance to play the winning team.

to move: for the losing team to leave the field.

Knockfoot

Knockfoot--as well as the related game, pele--can be played by a group of girls, but at any one time only two girls are playing. The principle of the game is a simple one: one girl is the leader and the other the follower. As a given moment, the leader stamps with one foot (she "knock her foot"), and the other must correctly imitate her. The particulars of the game are set forth in the description of it presented here.

(SECOND TEXT) Knockfoot

Knockfoot, that girl game. You got one person who in and the other people standing on the side for her to play with them. And they play the game by knocking their foot on the ground; that why they call it "knockfoot." And the person who in will go to one of the girl on the line for them to play. And they start jumping up and knocking their foot on the ground. If the person who in throw her right foot, the person who trying to catch it must throw the same foot. That the left foot, since they facing each other. If the person ain't throw the left foot, that mean the girl got point. And she dor go to the next person, and she will do the same thing. If she throw her left foot, then the other person must throw the right foot to catch her. If that person throw her right foot and it catch her, then they will play one more time to see if the girl will still catch the one who fini catching her. If they play and the girl na catch her, then that mean she still in. But if they play and the girl ain't catch her, then, the girl out. The other girl, she the leader now. And she go to the first girl and start all over again.

The other game: they call it "pele." It got rhythm. The girl dor be clapping their hand and singing, "Zero, zero, zero." One girl, she the leader. She go to one girl, and they knock their foot down and it go like this: something like kpla-u-kpla. Something like that. And if the other girl come and miss it, just like in knockfoot, then she will leave her and go to the next person. She got one point now. Then they will start knocking, "One pele, one pele, one pele," and they will knock their foot down again. If the other girl miss her foot again, then she will go to the next girl and start knocking again: "Two pele, two pele." That mean her point going up. Or if the other girl catch her foot like in knockfoot, then this girl now, she the one will be in. Then she will start. But that one, she ain't got point yet, she got to start from the top now, and say, "Zero, zero," and then they will jump up. If she get one point, she will start going down the same way with "One pele, two pele," like that. It will go on till somebody win the game. Sometime they will make score. They will say ten to win the game. The first person who reach ten, that the winner. (END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

Were you able to keep straight which girl did what? Even after you become familiar with the pronunciation of Liberian English and know most of the vocabulary, you may still have trouble at times following stories; the rules relating pronouns and the words they replace are not identical in Liberian English to those of Standard English.

To see whether or not you succeeded in keeping the participants straight, the first paragraph of the description is repeated below. This time, names have been assigned to tne participants. Mna and Musu are the first to play, and then Pai plays the winner. In the blanks in the paragraph, fill in the name of the girl referred to:

Knockfoot, that girl game. You got one person who in and the other people standing on the side for her to play with them. And they play the

game by knocking their foot on the ground; that why they call it "knock-foot." And the person who in (Mna) will go to one of the girl on the line (Musu) for them to play. And they start jumping up and knocking their foot on the ground. If (1)_____ throw her right foot, (2)_____ must throw the same foot. That the left foot, since they facing each other. If (3)_____ain't throw the left foot, that mean (4)_____ got point. And (5)_____ dor go to the next person (Pai), and she will do the same thing. If (6)_____ throw her left foot, then (7)_____ must throw the right foot to catch her. If (8)_____ throw her right foot, and it catch (9)_____, then they will play one more time to see if (10)_____ will still catch (11)_____, the one who fini catching her. If they play and Mna na catch Pai, then that mean (12)_____ still in. But if they play and Mna ain't catch her, then, (13)_____ out. (14)_____, she the leader now. And (15)_____ go to the first girl and start all over again.

Here are the answers:

(1)	Mna	(5)	Mna	(9)	Mna	(13)	Mna
(2)	Musu	(6)	Mna	(10)	Mna	(14)	Pai
(3)	Musu	(7)	Pai	(11)	Pai	(15)	Pai
(4)	Mna	(8)	Pai	(12)	Mna		

knockfoot and pele: The two games, knockfoot and pele, have essentially the same rules. The two major differences between them are in the nature of the stamping motion (it involves the whole body in knockfoot, only the leg in pele) and in the scoring. Pele scoring is described on the tape; knockfoot scoring is done in multiples of ten. That is, each time the leader defeats the follower, she gets ten points. (The follower gets no points for correctly matching the leader.) Scoring continues by tens up to 110. In place of 120, girls say kor (from Standard English 'score'); then they say kor one, kor two, and kor three for successive victories. The first girl to reach kor four wins. Thus, it takes sixteen victories to win a game of knockfoot. (When a leader is replaced,

she keeps the score she has accumulated; if she re-enters the game and becomes the leader again, her score continues where it left off.)

knockfoot, that girl game: knockfoot (and pele) are girls' games. Small boys play them too, but only infrequently.

who in: who's the leader.

for her to play with them: for her to play with.

if the person ain't throw the left foot, that mean the girl got point: If the follower fails to imitate the leader, the leader gets a point.

she dor go: dor is like can, a marker of habitual actions. Other examples of dor are the following:

My cat dor steal.	'My cat steals.'
That boy dor be to my house all the time.	'That boy comes to my house often.'

(Here and in general, some speakers would use can rather than dor.)

if that person throw her right foot and it catch her, then they will play one more time to see if the girl will still catch the one who fini catching her: if the follower throws her right foot and thereby defeats the leader, then they will play one more time to see if the original leader (who is now the follower) will defeat the girl who has just defeated her.

if they play and the girl na catch her, then that mean she still in: if the original leader wins the rematch, then she moves on to a new opponent.

but if they play and the girl ain't catch her, then the girl out: but if they play and the original leader (now the follower) loses again, then she's out.

the first girl: Each time the leadership changes hands, the new leader goes back to the beginning of the line and takes her opponent from there.

and if the other girl come and miss it: and if the follower fails to match the leader.

she got one point now: the leader has one point.

if the other girl miss her foot again, then she will go to the next girl and start knocking again: if the new follower, too, misses her foot, then the leader will go to the next girl and start stamping again.

she the one will be in: In constructions of this sort--where the noun after the copula is the head noun and subject of a relative clause--the relative pronoun is frequently omitted.

Momo the person told me that.

That my auntie pound the fufu. 'My aunt's the one who pounded the fufu.'

they will make score: they will decide in advance what the winning score will be.

When the Ghanaian football club Asante Kotoko defeated Invincible Eleven 3-0 in 1980, John--an I.E. diehard--was grief-stricken.

what did John say?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

AAAAAY MANNN, AAAAY YYAAHHHH. HMMMMMMM. OH MAH PEEPO!
OH JOHN! WEH YOU KRAHN SO FOR. DUHN TEH ME DA I.E. BISNAY
YOUN SEE HAH I.E. GO LEH DEI PEEPO BE UP LEH DAT EHRAY BODY WOH DEPENDIN ON DEM. DEN DEI GO MAKE PEEPO SHAIN.
MAN MOO FROM HYEAH YAH. I.E. AIN WUFF DEI GO LEH KOTOKO DISGRIS DEM LEH DAH LOOKH, HOE THREE-ZERO.
MIGHTY BARROLLE

1) JOHN: Ay, man, ay-yah. Hm, oh, my people!

BARROLLE FAN: Oh, John, what you crying so for? Don't tell me that I.E. business.

2) JOHN: You ain't see how I.E. go let the people beat us like that. Everybody was depending on them. Then they go make people shame.

3) BARROLLE FAN: Man, move from here, yah. I.E. ain't worth. They go let Kotoko disgrace them like that. Look at, whole three-zero.

ay-yah. . . oh, my people: common cries of distress.

don't tell me that I.E. business: don't tell me that it is I.E.'s loss that has you crying.

they go make people shame: they humiliated their fans (by their poor performance).

move from here: don't come complaining to me.

whole three-zero: the use of whole draws attention to the one-sidedness of the score.

UNIT ELEVEN: LIBERIAN HUMOR

Liberians enjoy language: this shows up in Liberian humor. For example, malapropisms are the basis of innumerable jokes. The malapropisms presented here are usually attributed to a cabinet official from the Tubman era. However, there is no evidence that the man ever said any of the things attributed to him.

(FIRST TEXT) Malapropisms

I say: let me tell yall one fun, yah. After the April Twelfth coup, three soldiers went to one old man house to go and arrest him. So when they got there, they rang the doorbell, and the old man came and open the door. So the soldiers told him, say, "You are under arrest."

He say, "Oh, for what?"

So the soldiers say, "For rampant corruption."

He say, "Round pan? Esther, come here. Soldiers, this is my wife, Esther. Ask her. Esther, do I know anything about kitchen business? When you dish up the food, what kind of pan do you put my food in? Ehn't that square pan? Now here this man talking about I can eat in round pan, he coming arrest me for round-pan corruption. Ehn, go in the kitchen. Look there; if you see any round pan there, then you can carry me."

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

fun: joke.

April Twelfth coup: the April 12, 1980, coup which overthrew the Tolbert government.

coup: Many people, like the speaker, pronounce the final p on this word. It is another example of "spelling pronunciation."

rampant corruption: After the April Twelfth coup, the charges most frequently brought against officials of the Tolbert government were rampant corruption and high treason.

ehn: here, a signal that a command is coming.

carry me: here, take me to jail.

(SECOND TEXT)

One time again, some soldiers went to him to arrest him for high treason. So the soldier told him, say, "You are under arrest for high treason."

He say, "Me? I don't have any high trees in my yard. How can you come (and) and arrest me for high treason? Go look in my yard; if you see any high tree there, then you can carry me."

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

(THIRD TEXT)

Then one time, he went to the supermarket, this same old man now. He bought some food. After the cashier got through checking everything, the cashier told him, say, "Old man, here your total o."

He say, "Total?' My people, yall come. Look all around this thing here. Yall see any total here? Look, let me tell you, yah, I will pay for everything in this place here, but I will not pay for total because I ain't buy no total."

(END OF THIRD TEXT)

(FOURTH TEXT)

One time he and his driver were going somewhere and the gas start to finish. The needle left small to reach "E." So the driver told him, say, "Bossman, the gas coming finish o."

He say, "Let me see the gauge, man."

When he look at the thing, he got vex. He say, "You foolish, ehn? How can you tell me, say, 'The gas coming finish'? Ehn't the needle almost to 'E'? You don't know 'E'? That mean 'Enough.' The time the needle reach

to 'F,' that the time you suppose to talk. 'F,' that 'Finish.' But 'E,' that 'Enough,' man."

(END OF FOURTH TEXT)

NOTES

the gas start to finish: the gas tank was just about empty.

left small: This (or the present-tense variant, leave small) is the usual Liberian English way of expressing 'almost.'

I left small to die that day. 'I almost died that day.'

Left small for me to fight the guy. 'I almost fought the guy.'

vex: The usual Liberian English word for 'angry.'

(FIFTH TEXT)

Hmm, another joke about this same old man: one time he was suppose to go on the airfield to meet Emperor Haile Selassie. So they told him, say, "The man you are going to meet is Emperor Haile Selassie." So that whole night, the old boy sat up memorizing this name here, "Haile Selassie, Haile Selassie." By the time he could reach the airfield, he stump his toe and forgot the name. So when he went (to) up to the Emperor, he told him, he say, "Oh, Emperor Helluva Elastic, hello."

(END OF FIFTH TEXT)

NOTES

stump: stub.

helluva: big, mighty.

(SIXTH TEXT)

They had a conference in Monrovia the last time for so-so big people from the Liberian and French government. When the conference finish, the President ask this same old man to give the vote of thanks. He got up and

give a helluva speech. He say he was so happy that they could hold meeting like this. Then he told the Liberian delegation, "My fellow Liberians, thank you very much." He told the French people, say, "My fellow Frenchmen, I want to tell you, 'Messy poopoo.'"

(END OF SIXTH TEXT)

NOTES

the last time: not long ago.

so-so: nothing but.

helluva: here, powerful.

poopoo: poopoo and peepee are used by adults as well as children and are not considered vulgar. Likewise, toilet, meaning 'to defecate; excrement' and piss are not considered vulgar.

(SEVENTH TEXT)

So one time again, when Tubman was living, Tubman wanted to make him ambassador. So Tubman ask him, say, "Where do you want to go?"

So he told Tubman, say, "Oh, man, I want to be the embarrassment to the United States."

So Tubman told him, say, "Oh, no, you will stay right here and embarrass me. You ain't going anywhere."

(END OF SEVENTH TEXT)

UNIT TWELVE: ONE PEOPLE, ONE FUTURE

Recent governments, beginning with President Tubman's administration, have recognized that tribalism threatens the development of the nation. Leaders have repeatedly deplored it. The dialogue presented here is a sixty-second advertisement played on the government radio station, ELBC, during the first few months of the PRC government. (The singing in Vai is by the popular Liberian singer, Yata Zoe. It exhorts all those who are sleeping to wake up.)

(TEXT) One People, One Future

HE: Hey, lady, can you spare a minute?

SHE: Yes. What's your problem?

HE: Not a problem as such, but I've been sitting here wondering.

SHE: Wondering about what?

HE: About many things. Some people like to call others Mandingo, Kisi, Lorma, Grebo. . .

SHE: Oh, forget it, Johnny, those are tribes. Liberia is a country made up of many different tribes, but there is only one Liberia with one future and the same people. In short, Liberians are one people with one future.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

In addition to the names by which ethnic groups are ordinarily called, some other names are applied to particular groups: Buzie, originally the name of a Lorma chief, has come to be a pejorative term for the Lorma. Dingo (from 'Mandingo') is a highly pejorative term applied to Mandingos. Both these terms, then--Buzie and, especially, Dingo--should be avoided.

Ethnic Designations

It is a reflection of Liberia's history that the terms by which ethnic groups are known are emotion-charged. This is particularly true of those terms which distinguish the emigrants from the New World and their descendants from the people whom they met here and their descendants. The use of ethnic labels is a delicate matter. Moreover, an insider/outsider distinction

exists such that members of a particular group may take offense when an outsider calls them by a term which they themselves use to describe themselves. Thus, someone who speaks of "we the country people" may object to an outsider's reference to "the country people."

The terms used in Liberia are discussed below, with particular reference to the connotations which the use of each of them carries.

The Settlers

Before the various terms in use to describe the Settlers are discussed, a note of qualification is in order. By both the wardship system (whereby children from indigenous ethnic groups grew up in Settler homes) and extensive intermarriage with members of the indigenous ethnic groups, the Settler class came to include many whose ancestry is not wholly--or, sometimes, not at all--New World in origin. Often Settler and its synonyms apply to all those who speak English, practice Christianity, have been married in a church, and accept the settler version of history--whether their forebears came from Savannah or Sanniquellie.

The following terms are applied to those who came from the New World:

Settler	Congo
pioneer	civilized
Americo-Liberian, A.L., Merico, Merican	kwi

Settler: This is probably the most neutral term for those who came from the New World and their descendants. It is the one used most often by contemporary social scientists.

pioneer: a non-pejorative term. It is not widely used, however.

Americo-Liberian, A.L., Merico, Merican: Americo-Liberian arose in the nineteenth century and was, for the first half of the twentieth century, the usual designation for the Settler group. Then, the Tubman government promulgated the Unification and Integration Policy, with its goal of national unity. Americo-Liberian, Merico (a shortened version of it), and Merican (pronounced [mɛɛkɛ̃]) were seen as divisive and were, therefore, discouraged. Since that time, Americo-Liberian has been in official disfavor. A.L., the abbreviation of Americo-Liberian, is used more widely among expatriates than among Liberians; it, too, is in official disfavor.

Congo: In addition to the Settlers, there was another group who came here in the nineteenth century, the "Recaptured Africans." They had been on slave ships bound for the New World, and these ships had been intercepted en route (and their human cargo thereby recaptured) by the U.S. Navy. The Africans on board were settled in and around Monrovia. At first, many of the people brought to Monrovia were from the region around the mouth of the Congo River; as a consequence, Recaptured Africans came to be known in Liberia as "Congoes." In time, the Congoes entered the lower strata of Settler

society, and the distinction between Settlers and Congoes became blurred. The word Congo came to be a pejorative term applied to the entire Settler class, New World emigrant and Recaptured African alike. While it retains its pejorative cast, Congo is far and away the most commonly used designation for Settlers.

civilized: This term is often used as a designation for a member of the Settler group; it is used equally often with reference to life-style and training rather than ancestry. d'Azevedo notes that the term

> . . .refers essentially to religion (usually Christianity) and education (Euroamerican). . .The terms "civilized" and "uncivilized" are used extensively in the hinterland and do not necessarily imply an invidious distinction, but rather a practical cultural distinction.*

In more westernized milieus, however, the use of civilized and uncivilized is resented. In general, outsiders probably should avoid the use of these two terms.

kwi: d'Azevedo defines kwi in the following way:

> a term widely used among tribal peoples to refer to all foreigners, or those who have come from across the sea. It includes the descendants of Liberian colonists as well as Americans and Europeans. It has also come to be applied to all "civilized" or urban people who dress and behave in a non-traditional manner.

Thus, in its broadest sense, kwi, too, refers more to life-style than to ethnic origin.

The Indigenous Peoples

The following terms are applied to members of indigenous ethnic groups:

tribal people	aborigines
country people	uncivilized
native people	

None of these terms carries a favorable connotation. This is especially true when the speaker is an outsider.

tribal people: This term is probably the least negative of the designations for members of indigenous ethnic groups. It is the one which has been used most often by social scientists. (However, African social scientists in general have begun to shy away from tribe since it suggests "primitive" people: that is, Europe has "ethnic groups," but Africa has "tribes.")

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*This and subsequent quotations from d'Azevedo are taken from d'Azevedo, Warren L., Some Terms from Liberian Speech. Monrovia: Peace Corps, 1967.

country people: This is perhaps the term most frequently heard. As noted in Unit Eight, country is synonymous with 'traditional' and is also applied to--among other things--cloth, foodstuffs, and medicine. It can, however, carry a negative connotation when used to refer to people.

native people: This term is similar to country. It is used less frequently, however, and is more likely to be carrying a negative connotation.

aborigine: This term was used in government documents as recently as the Tubman administration. It is generally considered pejorative (though some young Western-educated politically oriented descendants of indigenous ethnic groups have taken to using the term).

uncivilized: See civilized above. Probably, this term should be avoided by outsiders.

In addition to these terms, occasionally (but not frequently) the term (true) sons/daughters of the soil is heard to describe tribal people. In older Liberian history books, the term referred to anyone born in Liberia, regardless of the person's ethnic origins. Now the term is apparently being taken over by those for whom membership in an indigenous ethnic group is a reason for pride.

Conclusion

In one sense, all the terms listed above are potentially unsuitable. As noted at the beginning, the integration of all people into equal partnership in Liberian society and their unification as Liberians is a fundamental task of the Liberian government. Indeed, the well-being of Liberians and their country depends crucially upon its achievement. In keeping with this, probably the best way to describe Liberians--whatever the ethnic origin of their parents and grandparents--is Liberians.

UNIT THIRTEEN: THE CARPENTER

Getting a table made is similar to getting trousers made (as discussed in Unit Five). First, the contract must be made; this is arrived at through bargaining. Also, the specifications of the table (or trousers) must be established. Once all of this has been settled, the buyer's task is to get the craftsman to do the work. The go-come-back, go-come-back which Wiah sought to avoid in dealing with the tailor is a hazard of dealing with carpenters, too, as the encounters presented here illustrate.

In the maneuvering which goes on in getting something made, the size of the advance given a craftsman can be crucial. Ordinarily, he will require an exchange. It is a safeguard that he will be compensated for the work he has agreed to do. However, if the buyer pays most or all of the total price in advance, he or she has surrendered considerable leverage to the craftsman and will find it more difficult to ensure that the product will be made to the agreed-upon specifications by the agreed-upon time.

(FIRST TEXT) First Visit

FLOMO: Hello, bossman.

CARPENTER: My man, hello, man.

FLOMO: You the bossman here, eh?

CARPENTER: Yeah, I the one.

FLOMO: Eh, bossman, you man, I came for you to make my table.

CARPENTER: Table?

FLOMO: Yeah, just table for a little poor boy to study.

CARPENTER: You mean table for room?

FLOMO: Yeah, center table, just four feet long, two feet wide.

CARPENTER: But how the way you want it, you want it with formica, or just varnish table?

FLOMO: Just varnish table. I don't like that formica, because when you put candle on it, formica will come up. So I just want varnish, that all.

CARPENTER: No, but if you want it the formica way, if I fix it, it will not move.

FLOMO: But if you put formica on, then how much you will charge?

CARPENTER: Center table, that seventeen dollar.

FLOMO: Seventeen dollar with the formica?

CARPENTER: Yeah, with the formica.

FLOMO: Suppose you don't put formica there, how much I will pay?

CARPENTER: I will charge you twelve dollar.

FLOMO: Twelve dollar?

CARPENTER: Yeah.

FLOMO: But now, you see, the formica table would be all right because it would be smooth, you know, but I can't pay seventeen dollar.

CARPENTER: Then how much you able to pay?

FLOMO: Pay twelve.

CARPENTER: Twelve dollar? Oh, no, my man.

FLOMO: Youself you know, I poor boy.

CARPENTER: Well, if you want to pay twelve, then I will give you the name for the place I dor buy the formica from. Then you can go there and buy your own. When you bring it, then you can pay twelve dollar. Because if you go there, you will see yourself. If I tell you something now, you will say that lie.

FLOMO: No, I believe you, but you got to help your son, poor boy, trying to get something for his room, just to study.

CARPENTER: All right, I will help you. The seventeen dollar, I can take off something, but no carpenter in Monrovia will say, "I will give to you for twelve dollar." No.

FLOMO: So how much you want to help me?

CARPENTER: I will take out three dollar for you. That fourteen dollar.

FLOMO: Ay, my man. Only twelve dollar, remain two dollar more. Ay, man! OK, make it thirteen.

CARPENTER: For the table?

FLOMO: But I want the formica on it. Just help me with the dollar.

CARPENTER: No, man, just put the dollar there.

FLOMO: OK, let's make it thirteen-fifty.

CARPENTER: Thirteen-fifty? OK, I will make it thirteen-fifty.

FLOMO: OK.

CARPENTER: So when you will be coming back for it?

FLOMO: On tomorrow.

CARPENTER: OK.

FLOMO: If it will be ready, I will come back for it.

CARPENTER: It will be ready. Let's say around ten o'clock. You can come then.

FLOMO: OK. You want me to pay advancement now, or come back and pay everything down tomorrow?

CARPENTER: No, you pay advance before you go.

FLOMO: All right, I will give you ten.

CARPENTER: OK.

FLOMO: Tomorrow I will come back and pay the balance three-fifty.

CARPENTER: Yeah.

FLOMO: So you know what I want.

CARPENTER: Yeah, I know. You just tell me, say, center table, you don't have to say four feet, two feet, or so.

FLOMO: Yeah, but I want something under there for my books, too.

CARPENTER: Ah, you see there, you na bring something else again.

FLOMO: No, it not anything, just small something for my books to be under there.

CARPENTER: All right, I will fix that one for you.

FLOMO: I don't want formica on that.

CARPENTER: I know, I know.

FLOMO: OK, then, I will come back tomorrow around ten. Here your ten dollar.

CARPENTER: Thank you. Let me fix your receipt, yah.

FLOMO: OK.

CARPENTER: Here your receipt. If you come, I not here, I will leave the table with my helper.

FLOMO: But I want to meet yourself because, if you don't fix it the way I like it, then that one, that different something, you na break contract.

CARPENTER: I know.

FLOMO: Then that mean you have to pay my money and the money I spend to come here. You will have to give everything back.

CARPENTER: Ay! Don't talk plenty. I say, bossman, go-come-back. When you come back, you will meet your table here. When you come back self tomorrow, (when you) when your eye buck on the thing, sometime you will say, "Here your cold water." Because I will really fix it.

FLOMO: OK. I will come back tomorrow for my table.

CARPENTER: All right. See you then.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

bossman . . . little poor boy: By using these terms, Flomo wants to establish the carpenter's higher stature compared to his own lowly stature. In this way, he hopes to make a better bargain.

table . . . to study: table to study on.

table for room and center table: Both are references to a type of table roughly four feet long, two feet wide, and three feet high.

how the way you want it: how do you want it?

varnish table: varnished wooden table.

come up: become separated from the table.

move: become separated from the table.

how much I will pay: Placing the auxiliary before the subject--a feature of Standard English--is also a feature of the more standard-like varieties of Liberian English. Often, in less standard-like varieties, the auxiliary is not present in the question, as these examples from the carpenter's speech illustrate:

How the way you want it?

Then how much you able to pay?

In other cases, where the auxiliary remains, it does not come before the subject but comes where it would in declarative sentences:

So when you will be coming back for it?

pay twelve: I will pay twelve dollars.

you will see yourself: you will see for yourself.

if I tell you something now: anything I tell you now.

your son, poor boy: your son, a poor boy.

I will give to you for twelve dollar: When the object of give is understood, it need not be expressed. Similarly, the object of send need not be expressed; however, when send occurs without an expressed direct object, the construction often has a special meaning:

Send me, yah. 'Please bring me something (a small gift) when you are returning from the place you're going to.'

(This is said most often by people in the interior to those departing for Monrovia.)

remain: Frequently the subject of remain follows it:

The LU people na carry their entrance to eight of the county; remain Lofa. 'The people from the University of Liberia have administered their entrance examination in eight of the counties; only Lofa County remains for them to visit.'

play sabi: act stingy. When applied to a person, sabi has two different meanings: 'knowledgeable' and 'stingy.' play is frequently used in negative contexts to mean 'act or engage in.'

The man play didiba; now he getting two paycheck. 'Through deceit, the man managed to get on the payroll twice.'

I helping you with whole three dollar to pay fourteen: I'm taking

three dollars off the price to enable you to pay only fourteen.

I beg you: a stronger variant of 'please.'

if it cause me to walk: if I have to use my transportation money to pay you and I have to walk as a result.

it's no need: there's no need for me to promise you an additional dollar; I won't be able to come up with it.

you ain't got fourteen dollar: here, the negative word could either be ain't or don't. That is, they have the same meaning, and, in fast speech like this, they are pronounced the same way: by lengthening and nasalizing the final vowel of the preceding word and raising the pitch, [yuũ].

what to do: again, an expression of resignation: 'that's how it is.'

the formica something: the formica top. something is akin to to-do; that is, it corresponds to American English 'whatchamacallit.'

on tomorrow: In Liberian Standard English (and other varieties of Liberian English), on tomorrow, on today, and on yesterday are acceptable.

you want me to pay advancement now, or come back and pay everything down tomorrow? No: As pointed out in Unit Five, no is a possible answer to a question containing or; the no is in answer to the second clause of the question. pay advancement is the same as pay advance, 'to make partial prepayment.'

the balance three-fifty: the remaining three-fifty. Other examples of this use of balance.

The tailor give me my trousers, but he ate the balance cloth.	'The tailor gave me my trousers, but he kept the leftover cloth.'
After you cut your own of food, give the pekin them the balance rice.	'After you have helped yourself to the food, give the children whatever rice remains.'

or so: and so forth.

yeah, but I want something under there for my books, too: Had Flomo mentioned this from the beginning, the final price might have been higher.

ah, you see there, you na bring something else again: The carpenter is establishing his right to raise the price. Since Flomo is changing the specifications, the carpenter has the right to adjust the price. (In fact, he does not exercise this right.)

if you come, I not here: if you come and I'm not here.

yourself: you personally.

pay my money and the money I spend to come here: refund the purchase price and the cost of my carfare. Regardless of what might happen, Flomo would have a hard time getting the carpenter to pay his carfare.

when your eye buck on the thing: when you see it.

here your cold water: here's your bonus, i.e. money, for doing such a good job. In other contexts, cold water can mean 'a gift to curry favor, soothe ruffled feelings, appease anger, ask for forgiveness, or set the stage for negotiations.'

(SECOND TEXT) Second Visit

FLOMO: Hello, bossman.

CARPENTER: What you say, my man?

FLOMO: I here now o. You told me to come ten, but I want to give you chance, so by eleven o'clock, I can be here; when I come, then everything finish, just waiting on me to put it in the car and carry it. So, I here now for my table.

CARPENTER: Oh, my man. I think you will come back tomorrow because your table, somebody just pick it up.

FLOMO: Come back tomorrow for my table? Somebody pick it up? For what? I pay for the table already.

CARPENTER: You know we dor fix the thing. We dor put it in front here when we finish it. We finish with your own. One man came here, he express that he pay seventeen dollar, so he took it.

FLOMO: But you fix the table for me, already promise me for the table. Then why I must come back tomorrow?

CARPENTER: I promise you. I told you ten o'clock. That the time I told you. The time on the slip. Look on the receipt.

FLOMO: Yeah, ten o'clock, but I came after ten because I had to do some other work.

CARPENTER: But then, that it there. You fini breaking your own neck,

so it no need. Come back tomorrow. I will finish your table.

FLOMO: Just because you say I must pay thirteen-fifty and somebody came and say they had seventeen dollar, you sold it to them. Now I spend one dollar to come here, I have to spend another to go and come back.

CARPENTER: But then, that one, that not my business because I told you ten o'clock. And it after eleven o'clock, it some minutes to twelve.

FLOMO: So you want me to come back tomorrow?

CARPENTER: Yeah, come back tomorrow, you will meet your table here. When you come back the same time, ten o'clock, everything will be finish.

FLOMO: All right.

CARPENTER: All right, see you then.

FLOMO: OK.

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

give you chance: give you the chance to finish it before I got here.

for what: why? Its use conveys indignation.

he express that he pay seventeen dollar: he said he would pay seventeen dollars.

I promise you: I promised you.

but then, that it there. You fini breaking your own neck, so it no need: You've just destroyed your own case. There is no need to continue the argument.

(THIRD TEXT) Third Visit

FLOMO: Hello, bossman.

CARPENTER: Yeah, hello, man, bossman. What you say? You all right?

FLOMO: Yeah. I here now.

CARPENTER: Oh, you back?

FLOMO: Yeah, I came soon today. Nine-thirty.

CARPENTER: Oh, here your table here, the only thing, I ain't put the shelf that you told me to put under there. I ain't finish with it yet.

FLOMO: Oh, no.

CARPENTER: Yeah. Just thirty minute. I will soon finish with the thing.

FLOMO: Thirty minute? I came soon so that everything can be ready. You told me to come ten yesterday. I came eleven o'clock, you say I was late. You told me to come ten the next day, I came nine-thirty so that you couldn't sell my table again. But now you say I must wait for thirty minute. What I waiting for thirty minute for? (I brought, I) I brought a car--I don't have any money, I beg this man to bring me so that he can take my table to my place. There the man. He say he can only wait for five minute. All I had in mind, just to come pick up my table, put it in the car, and carry it. But if I let this man go now, then I have to pay one-fifty from here to my place, so that mean I will only have to give you two dollars.

CARPENTER: No, man, you can't act like that to me. I told you ten o'clock. You know I told you ten. It nine-thirty now, thirty minute more to ten. I will soon finish with the thing. In fact self, I finish the table already, just the shelf you told me to put under.

FLOMO: If you don't finish by ten then I will not give you correct money.

CARPENTER: OK, Bossman.

FLOMO: I will take out my taxi fare.

CARPENTER: Yeah, bossman, anything you say. But just let me fix it. I will soon finish with the thing, man. You think this thing that hard work? To do this? Just to put the shelf. I finish with the table already. Nothing here again.

FLOMO: OK, old man. I know that your job.

CARPENTER: Joe, bring the varnish, yah. Let's varnish this man thing quick-quick because it almost ten o'clock. Let the man carry his table, yah. My man, here your table. Everything finish.

FLOMO: The table all right.

CARPENTER: Yeah.

FLOMO: But bossman, you ain't nail this thing good, man. Look at the nail showing outside here. Look at that.

CARPENTER: What kind of nail showing outside?

FLOMO: The hurry-hurry work ain't good, man. The nail showing outside here. Look at that kind of thing.

CARPENTER: What kind of nail showing outside here, man?

FLOMO: The thing ain't go straight in, man. Look at the other side. Look at this thing hanging here.

CARPENTER: What kind of nail? That how the thing suppose to be.

FLOMO: No, it suppose to go in straight. Why the other side looking different, the other side looking different? No, man. You see, just because you want to help me, now you want to give me ugly thing. Look at the formica not holding the table. Look here, the thing coming up. Fix the thing good, man. Don't act like that to me.

CARPENTER: Oh, I see. You talking plenty, ten o'clock will reach, you only going to give me two dollar.

FLOMO: No, I want to pay you, but I want you to fix my table.

CARPENTER: Let's forget it, yah. I don't want to talk too much. I will fix everything. Here, let me fix the nail first. Now, where the formica at, it not holding the thing?

FLOMO: Right here, look here.

CARPENTER: Joe, bring the glue, yah. Let's put it here. Ehn't it finish?

FLOMO: Yeah, it finish, but let me see first. But just now when you were fixing the formica, why you knock this place with your hammer for? I hope it will not crack when this thing dry o.

CARPENTER: It will not crack, man. When it dry, you will see. It will go there good. When it crack, you bring it back again.

FLOMO: You sure about that one, bossman?

CARPENTER: Trust me.

FLOMO: OK.

CARPENTER: Your heart satisfy now?

FLOMO: Yeah. Here your three-fifty.

CARPENTER: OK. Thank you, yah.

FLOMO: All right, see you again, bossman.

CARPENTER: OK, see you.

(END OF THIRD TEXT)

NOTES

came soon: came early.

beg: requested.

but if I let this man go now, then I have to pay one-fifty from here to my place, so that mean I will only have to give you two dollars: if this man leaves before the table is ready, then I will have to pay $1.50 in taxi fare, and I will deduct that amount from the $3.50 which I still owe you.

just the shelf you told me to put under: it's only the shelf which I haven't done.

correct money: the previously agreed-to amount, $3.50.

nothing here again: nothing else remains to be done. Some of the various uses of again are discussed in Unit Fourteen.

carry his table: Above, carry was said to mean 'to take (a person) somewhere.' It can also mean, as it does here, 'to take (something) away, to remove.'

the hurry-hurry work: work done in haste.

what kind of: Often, as here, the use of this phrase expresses scorn or contempt.

why the other side looking different, the other side looking different?: Why does one side look different from the other?

not holding the table: not adhering to the table.

the thing coming up: the formica is coming apart from the table.

you talking plenty: Talk has a more specific meaning in Liberian English (than in American or British English). Usually, it implies argument. In some contexts, talk also means 'to bring matters into the open.'

why. . . for: Often what. . . for is used instead. In either case, the expression corresponds to Standard English 'why.'

your heart satisfy now?: are you satisfied now? Many Liberian English idioms involve the heart, for example:

His heart lay down.	'He was pleased.'
His heart clean.	'He is a man of integrity.'
His heart bitter.	'He's angry.'
He got big heart.	'He's overly ambitious; he's greedy.'

UNIT FOURTEEN: WAKES, BURIALS, AND FEASTS

The ceremonies attending someone's death and burial are important events in which the whole community participates. The character of those ceremonies depends upon which of the three cultural traditions the deceased and the deceased's family identify with. For the three--Mande-West Atlantic, Kru, and Western-Settler--have separate customs in these matters. (Kru here refers to all the ethnic groups of that cultural tradition: Kru, Bassa, Grebo, and the others.) Religious diversity has helped to shape this divergence, Islam influencing some areas of the Mande-West Atlantic tradition while Christianity is a part of the Western-Settler and, to some extent, Kru burial traditions.

In all cases, the ceremonies are a mixture of celebration and sorrow. People honor the deceased by feasting; at the same time, they gather to console the bereaved and themselves.

Three sets of customs are presented here. The first describes what Liberians call "a Christian wake." Such a wake would occur among Settlers and among westernized Liberians in general. The second describes what the Bassa do from the time of a person's death to the time of the burial and for the next few days thereafter. Finally, the third presents Lorma customs at the time of a person's death and then at the feast held some months later in memory of the dead person.

I. A Christian Wake

A wake is held throughout the night before the funeral. It is most often held in a private home, either that of the deceased or of one of the deceased's relatives. If the deceased was a government official, the wake is sometimes held in a government building such as the Capitol or a city hall. Though it is still the exception rather that the rule, it is becoming increasingly more common for a wake to be held in a church; in that case, the wake stops around midnight, and food and drink are usually not served.

(FIRST TEXT) A Christian Wake

At my auntie wake, people were sad and people were happy. The body was inside the house. A band was playing God song. And it had prayer-band people there, too, who were singing. Sometime the song can be sad, people crying and everything. Different time again, some of the people singing and rejoicing, like in Holy Ghost church, you know.

Outside the house, people were drinking, and some people singing because of the liquor. We had another band out there, too, one march

band, playing musical stroke like "Carry Me Halfway," and the people just clapping their hand and laughing. The people at my auntie wake or any other wake--the group inside the house singing, praying, sitting down in a sorrowful way, that the family and people close to the family. The ones outside now, drinking, they ain't family o.

Wake can start round nine at night and go to daybreak. The people give liquor and food to the people. Plenty people can leave by twelve to one. If the liquor plenty, hmm., then more people will stay long than twelve. People can sing and pray the whole night. Round about six, they can close the wake. One preacher will say short prayer and all the people who still there can go.

Then that same day now, they will carry the body to the church. Then they will have the funeral--that no happy business again o--the thing can be so sorrowful, people crying and everything.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

God song: hymn.

it had prayer-band people there: there were prayer-band people there. A prayer band is a group of people, mostly women, dressed in white. While the group is non-denominational and its members come from many different churches, its orientation is Pentecostal. Frequently, the family of the deceased will make arrangements to have one of the prayer bands attend the wake: the presence of the prayer band ensures that the hymn-singing will not flag during the night.

crying and everything: weeping and wailing. Throughout Liberia, women respond to the news of someone's death with loud wailing. They repeat this wailing at the funeral and burial of the person. To a lesser extent, women wail at a wake, too.

Holy Ghost church: a Pentecostal church, i.e. one in which people enter into trances and speak in tongues.

musical stroke: popular song.

the people give liquor and food to the people: the family gives liquor and food to all who are present.

stay long than twelve: stay longer than twelve. (See Unit Seventeen for a discussion of comparative constructions in Liberian English.)

close the wake: Opening the wake (at nine) and closing it (at six) involve brief religious services conducted by a member of the clergy.

all the people . . . can go: all the people go home.

that no happy business again o: there's no laughter now. Again has several related meanings in Liberian English. It can mean 'after all,'

They ain't kill the cow again. 'They didn't kill the cow after all.'

or 'now,'

What wrong again? 'What's wrong now?'
(This sentence need not imply that something was wrong previously.)

or 'anymore,'

Time I was a small little boy, tubman was my favorite barb. But now that I big, I can't cut my hair that way again.

'When I was little, tubman was my favorite haircut. But now that I'm big, I don't get my hair cut in that style anymore.'

The Burial Procession

After the church service, the procession of mourners escorts the body to the cemetery. A band leads the procession, followed by the hearse. The clergy come next. If the deceased was the member of a fraternal organization, usually called a society in Liberia, the members march next, garbed in society dress. They are followed by the relatives, the immediate family first. Then, if the deceased was, for example, a nurse or a policeman, all of the members of his or her profession come next--in uniform. They are followed by the church choir and, after the choir, all the other mourners.

At the grave, there is a brief religious rite of interment followed--if the deceased belonged to any society--by the society's burial ritual. Multiple society membership is common; in such a case, each society performs its own graveside rite.

II. (SECOND TEXT) A Bassa Wake

With the Bassa people, if the person die, yall play until they bury the person and, for few day after that, yall still play.

In Bassa sometime the people can keep the body for two week. Time person die, people can come to sympathize. They will come to the house there and be there drinking. Then after some days, they ready to put the

body in the casket. Before they put the body in the casket, people will come and dance, all kind of plays they will be playing, until they bring the casket. Like if they want to bury the person on Sunday, they will put the person in the casket Friday. Then Friday will be the family wake. And Saturday, everybody will come on the body. They can just be dancing and drinking. The whole night, they on it.

Time Sunday reach, they bu y the body. The family go home and sleep that night; then Monday, they put the mat down. If that man, four day; that woman, three day. They will stay on that mat all that time. People will sleep on the mat, on the ground, stay there all that time, and the family will call play. And when the family call play now, people will dance. People from other town, they come and dance. Sometime devil come in town and dance, too. And people cook dumboy, fufu. And they drink.

The people that sitting on the mat now, they the ones doing all the crying. If they say they want booze, the family give them. If they say they want food, the family give them. Anything they call for, the family give them. They believe that the dead person's on his way up, and they helping to carry the person up.

On the last day now, they do the last play, and everything finish. On that day they cut the family people hair. Man o, woman o, they shave all your hair. If you Bassa but you want to be what we call Merican, you don't want the people to shave your hair, you got to pay some money. Even so, they still got to wash you. The people they na shave, they wash them, too, because once you bereaved, people got to clean you. If you don't want the people to cut your hair and wash you, sometime, when some time pass, the dead body will humbug you. Time they fini shaving people and wash them, then everything finish. Everyone free.

That why our own of play wake can stay long. That why other people say Bassa people like too much of wake business.

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

play: The meaning of this word varies with the mourning-related customs of the area. In general, however, it involves traditional dancing, eating, and drinking.

few: a few.

sometime the people can keep body for two weeks: Sometimes two weeks elapse between the person's death and the burial.

family wake: This wake is for the relatives of the deceased. This wake is similar to the Western-Settler-style wake described above. There is hymn-singing, eating, and drinking; but there is no dancing. At the wake the next night, there is no hymn-singing.

everybody will come on the body: everybody--not just relatives--will come to the wake.

they on it: they continue to dance and drink.

time Sunday reach: on Sunday.

they put the mat down: mats are placed throughout the house where the wake was held.

if that man, four day; that woman, three day: people stay on the mats for four days if it is a man who has died and three if it is a woman.

call play: summon people to drink, dance, and feast.

devil: d'Azevedo defines this word in the following way:

> any masked dancer or performer, whether for entertainment or ritual. Not to be confused with the Euroamerican concept of "devil," "Satanic," or "evil," though this is the way the term was applied by early missionaries and other travellers to Africa. . . It is still common usage among English-speaking peoples of urban and rural Liberia, but there is an increasing avoidance of such terms by sophisticated Liberians. It is best to learn the specific local names for any ritual figures and to refer to them respectfully by these names. It is also important to know that many of these figures are primarily "mummers" or "entertainers" and that others are considered to represent sacred spirtual entities.

dumboy: boiled cassava pounded into a thick, viscous dough.

they helping to carry the person up: their crying assists the dea

person on his or her journey to heaven.

man o, woman o: whether you're a man or a woman.

but you want to be what we call Merican: but you don't want to observe tradition because you want to act westernized.

you got to pay some money: you can fulfill your obligation by paying money rather than having your head shaved.

the dead body will humbug you: the spirit of the dead person will trouble you. humbug means 'to harass, tease, bother, annoy, or inconvenience.'
The funeral customs of the Bassa and other Kru ethnic groups focus social attention on the detachment of the dead body from the community (rather than on the interment as such). The shaving and washing of the members of the deceased's family and the crying by the people on the mat are among the steps taken to achieve that separation.

everyone free: everyone is free to return home and to resume normal activities.

stay long: last a long time.

too much of: a lot of.

Mourning

The wearing of mourning is a prominent part of Western-Settler and Kru mourning. Black is the primary color of mourning. Liberian women ordinarily wear black to a wake and a funeral. White is also worn by some or, occasionally, purple. Whatever color is selected, a woman ordinarily wears only that color. That is, her accessories are the same color as her dress.

When a close relative dies, e.g. a parent, a woman enters a full year of mourning. (For less immediate kinship relations, the period of mourning is shorter.) This period is divided into two periods of roughly equal duration. During the first, which is called full or first mourning, a woman wears mourning as described above--that is, for most women, a black dress, with black accessories. Then, after six months or more of full mourning, a woman enters a period of half or second mourning. During this time, she wears black dresses with some white in them, e.g. black with white polka dots. Her accessories need no longer be black.

Men's mourning is far less extensive. Often men wear a piece of black cloth on their shirts to indicate bereavement, but they only do this for a few weeks at most. Among those groups which shave the heads of members of the deceased's family, the shaved head serves as a man's badge of mourning.

In the Mande-West Atlantic tradition, the wearing of mourning is far less elaborate where practiced at all. A Vai woman who is bereaved, for example, will indicate it by wearing a black headtie. The Lorma do not wear mourning.

III. (THIRD TEXT) A Lorma Feast

Lorma people own, if person die and that elder in the town, sometime they will not tell people that same day. Even though everybody in the place know the person na die, but they can just say the person sickness bad. Till the next following day before they tell people. The dead person people will not cry until the next morning. Time they tell everybody now, then they shoot gun, and the family people cry. They cry; they fall down. That way, people know the family person na die.

Time person die now and they tell everybody it, it will not stay long before they bury the person. Sometime the same day or even the next day. But, if they waiting for family people to come from far, the body will stay long small before they bury it.

They wrap the person in mat and other thing--lappa, headtie, bedsheet, they all white--and bury it. After that now before they start to fix the thing for the feast. Sometime they will make the feast in August or either December. That time everybody will be in town, then no farming again. The people who gone to scratch and all, they in town. Sometime they will not make the feast until the next following year. To make feast for person, that not small thing o. People got to wait and be sure they able. Then, time the people make the feast, people will carry good news.

That time, the time people planning the feast now, the family people will say what thing they can put. Sometime the town can contribute, too, but they can't charge them. Only the family they can charge to pay certain amount. Some people will just be there to bring in people to dance, and people to cook, and other people again to find sleeping place of people. If that big man now, the feast can stay seven day like that.

Time the feast come now, the people in the town get their own of people

to be singing and dancing. And other people will come from other town with their own of group to sing and dance. Sometime the devil, too, can come in town to dance.

And the people will drink. They can have different-different drink--hot liquor, beer, stout--the drink that can be there too much, that palm wine and cane juice. And the people can cook plenty. If they kill cow, they will just make it with soup and everybody can get some. But, time they kill cow, they will take out some part for the elder them. That respect business there o. It not good for these people to go home and say, "We went, but the people not give us respect." So they can give them some part. Time they give them the part now, sometime they can take it home to their wife them.

At the feast now, one person there--a nephew of the family--will be dressed funny way and be acting all kind of way. We say he the nephew of the feast. This person can be man or woman. He or she will take some old clothes, old bags, and put it on. If that woman, she will put up some big man-trousers, put up some old clothes, a working shirt, and sometime, she can take cutlass in her hand and be acting like the way man can act. The nephew can do it to make people to enjoy the party, so that they can not be thinking too much about the person who na die. Still, sometime people can be sad at the feast because they really missing the person.

(END OF THIRD TEXT)

NOTES

Lorma people own: among the Lorma people.

elder: a term and title of respect for any important older person.

they will not tell person: they will not announce the death.

the next following day: the next day.

they cry; they fall down: they wail, and there is an unrestrained

display of grief.

the family person na die: a person related to that family has died.

tell everybody it: Liberian English permits a pronominal direct object to follow a non-pronominal indirect object:

I will give Bestman it.

long small: here, a few days or so.

after that now before they start to fix the thing for the feast: only after the burial does the planning of the feast begin.

everybody will be in town: There is an annual cycle of farming, with ebbs and flows of activity. During crucial periods of the cycle, many people sleep on their farms rather than in town. Even those whose farms are close enough to town that they are able to sleep in town during such periods spend the entire day on the farm. Thus, these periods--the preparation for planting (by cutting the brush in the area selected for cultivation and then by burning the area), the planting itself, and the harvesting--are not optimal times for feasts.

scratch and all: scratch refers to a planting technique widely (but not universally) used in Liberia. and all refers to other agricultural activities related to planting.

to make feast for person, that not small thing o. People got to wait and be sure they able: The feast places a great financial burden upon the family of the deceased. Members of the family must be sure they have accumulated all the needed resources before they invite people to their feast.

then, time the people make the feast, people will carry good news: if the feast is bounteous, people will speak well of those who gave it.

the town: here, individuals in the town.

they can't charge them: the family does not compel any townsperson to contribute.

only the family they can charge to pay certain amount: only members of the family are compelled to make a contribution. Usually, there is a fixed amount which each family member must pay.

some people will just be there to bring in people to dance, and people to cook, and other people again to find sleeping place of people: various people are assigned different responsibilities: to arrange for dancers, for cooking, and for lodging for visitors.

if that big man now: if the deceased was an important person.

the people in the town get their own of people to be singing and dancing: a group from within the town hosting the feast will perform.

devil: See the comments in the description of Bassa wake-playing above with reference to this word.

hot liquor: hard liquor. Beer, stout, and palm wine are excluded from this group.

the drink that can be there too much, that palm wine and cane juice: the drinks that are there in abundance are palm wine and cane juice. palm wine is, according to d"Azevedo

> the sweet sap of the raffia and oil palms, collected from a cavity cut into the heart of the tree. The sweet--and lightly fermented--sap is called "woman's palm wine." The more sour--and more strongly fermented--one is called "the man's own." The fermentation occurs by natural yeasts.

cane juice is 'locally made rum.'

kill cow: The number of cows killed is often used as an index of the lavishness of the feast. Ordinarily, bulls rather than cows are killed. Cows, because of their ability to bear calves, are more valuable and less expendable.

they will just make it with soup: they will make a clear broth with the cowmeat.

that respect business there o: It's a matter of respect.

it not good for these people to go home and say, "We went, but the people not give us respect": it would reflect very badly upon those giving the feast were elders from other towns to return to their homes and report that they had not been accorded the respect due them.

to their wife them: for their wives to cook it.

all kind of way: here, in unusual or extraordinary ways.

put up: put on.

cutlass: machete.

be acting like the way man can act: parody men's mannerisms.

A Final Note

Although the customs pertaining to death and burial vary considerably from tradition to tradition, certain common attitudes underlie all of them: most strongly, that the community must share the grief and the responsibility for assuaging it. A Peace Corps Volunteer, if he or she is a part of the community, shares, too. Therefore, the Volunteer's presence at a wake or a funeral or a feast is appropriate. Calling to sympathize is also proper, and, in some areas, a small gift toward expenses is customary.

what did John say ?

created by O. Eugene Shaw artist: Reggie Townsend, Jr.

MA PLEE ENVANCE ME THENNY DALLOR SO AH CAN GO UP CONTRAY. MAH PA SMOR SEESTA DAH EHN MAH PEEPO SEN MAH LAY CORSIN TO COR ME. YOU NO AH LEH BIGGEST OF OR.
MAHN GOR JOHN, NAH MANY TAHN YOU WAY KAY YOUR PA ONE SMOR SEESTA ? EHN LASS YEAR YOU TO ME DEI SEEN STORAY HAH YOUR PA SEESTA DAH ?
OH MA... ER... ER... OH MA AH TOR SHOW YOU FONGAH. ANNEN-WAY, YOU GAH BESS. SHE WAY NAH DAH AGAIN. BOH PLEE LEMME DEI TWEXNY DALLOR MA, BECOR AH TOO JANN.

1) JOHN: Ma, please advance me twenty dollar so I can go up-country. My pa small sister die, and my people send my little cousin to call me. You know I the biggest of all.

2) MA MUSU: My God, John, how many time you will kill your pa one small sister? Ehn't last year you told me the same story how your pa sister die?

3) JOHN: Oh, Ma . . . er . . . er . . . oh, Ma, I thought sure you forgot. Anyway, you got best. She will not die again. But please lend me the twenty dollar, Ma, because I too jam.

my pa small sister: my father's younger sister.

the biggest of all: the eldest child.

you got best: you are right.

I too jam: I'm really pressed for money.

UNIT FIFTEEN: QUEEN CONTESTS

Among the various fund-raising activities undertaken by Liberian organizations, the queen contest is one of the most popular. There are two types of queen contest. One is the beauty pageant, à la Miss America, in which judges select the winner. The other is one in which members of the audience contribute money to the candidate of their choice, and the candidate who receives the most money wins. In the second type of queen contest--by far the more widely occurring of the two--each candidate represents some constituency. Thus, if it is an inter-school contest, each school sends a queen. (In this second type of queen contest, every candidate is referred to as a "queen.") It becomes a matter of pride to see that one's own queen wins. As a rule, the queen contests which are the greatest financial successes are the ones which play upon existing rivalries.

One variant of this type of queen contest is the calendar queen contest, in which there are twelve queens, one for each month. In such a contest, members of the audience support the queen representing their birth-month. While it is true that not everyone in Liberia can be sure of his or her birthday (the recording of birthdates and the observing of birthdays being Western concerns), a growing number can. Moreover, those who don't know their actual date of birth have usually selected one, and it is the adopted birth-month which commands their allegiance at contests of this sort.

(TEXT) A Queen Contest

I want to tell you about the calendar queen contest we put up the last time. For a calendar queen contest, you must have one queen for each month. They got so many way to pick these queen. If that school, you can have each class sending two-two, say, the seventh grade sending January and February, the eighth, you know, up the line like that. But the contest can be better when you make sure that each queen be born in her own month. Then she can be fighting hard for her own of month, and that how we did it.

Now a contest like this, it to raise money. The queen fine o, she ain't fine o, it not a matter of that. The winner, that the one got more money.

We had a queen contest and dance because that way you bring more people in. More people will not just want to come and just pay to the queen and walk out, so it good to have dance with the queen contest. That what we did,

too. Another thing again, if you want more people to come, the entrance fee got to be small.

That night then, the twelve queen them were on stage. But before the night of the contest, some of the queen went around to ask for help from the money-people in town--the big-big shot them and the merchants.

So there, that twelve queen them were on stage. Each one had a bowl in front of her for people to put money inside. And each queen had someone to speak for her. If that March now, the person beg all the March people to support their queen.

We had three round. When the first round start, the speaker them got up and gave a big speech. The man for October told the people, say, "All right. I will give twenty dollar for my queen. Who can beat that?" We play music and then, after that, the round finish. Time the first round finish, we tell the people how much each queen got, from small to big. April and November were so-so, June was little bit better, but October and January were fighting to be number one. October had one dollar more than January. Still, the money was not plenty.

Then the second round start. The people for October and January were just moving and making big-big mouth. January people say, "January will win. We first in the calendar, we got to be first in the calendar queen contest." And October say, "We ain't come here to play. We come to win." November, too, was trying hard. The November man say, "No month can able November. All you November people, come show these other people what it mean to be a November." When we say second round coming finish, few people start putting money. Time the second round finish now, we tell the people again how much their queen got. This time, it was hot now. April was trying, and June was there. November and January were in front, but October was first.

The other months, hmm, they were way behind.

Then the third round start, the last round now. Then that time things really got hot. October and January people were just moving up and down. Then the man for June gave a helluva speech. He told the June-born people say, "Will you sit here and allow an October to walk over you? Will you sit here and let a January rule you? No. You can't do that. You got to work hard for your month."

When we say the last round coming finish now, come see people running to help their queen. But when the thing was over and we fini counting the money, the thing was too surprising. When we come to look--oh!--Miss July was the queen. She use headwork, man. The whole night, her people ain't talk plenty. In fact self, they only put in small. July was near the bottom. People thought that July people were not serious. We never knew. All we make sure that the fight was between October and January and sometime June, but then, last moment to time, all the July people came up and put huge money there, man. There was nothing for the other people to do now, time gone. And that how Miss July got to be Calendar Queen.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

put up: staged.

if that school: if that is a high school with grades seven through twelve.

two-two: two each.

her own month, her own of month: the month she represents.

the queen fine o, she ain't fine o, it not a matter of that: whether or not a candidate is beautiful is not what the contest is all about. This is not a beauty pageant.

we had a queen contest and dance because that way you bring more people in: The dance is the drawing card that will get people to come to the contest.

the big-big shot them: prominent government officials.

each one had a bowl in front of her for people to put money inside: The queens sit at a long table (or at separate tables). In front of each queen is a bowl. People come up to the queen of their choice and drop the money into her bowl.

if that March now, the person beg all the March people to support their queen: for example, the speaker for March urged all the March-born people to support their queen.

we play music: The speeches and exhortations at a queen contest are interspersed with popular music.

from small to big: from the least to the most.

making big-big mouth: boasting a lot.

can able: is able to defeat, is superior to. When the object of able is not a person, then able means 'to be able to (do)':

I able it. 'I can do it.'

few: a few.

moving up and down: that is, bringing money to their queen.

come see: This is an expression which signals heightened activity.

headwork: clever strategy.

they only put in small: they contributed very little.

July people were not serious: July people were not sincere in trying to win; they lacked commitment.

we never knew: we didn't know.

all we make sure: all that we were certain of. In contexts like the present one, the use of make sure implies misguided certainty (akin to American English 'felt sure'). That is, we were convinced of something, but we were wrong.

last moment to time: at the last moment.

time gone: the contest was over.

UNIT SIXTEEN: HOLIDAYS

Holidays are happy days in Liberia. The biggest holidays of the year are Independence Day (July 26) and Christmas Day. While Christmas is religious in origin, its celebration in Liberia is largely secular. For Christians, New Year Eve is probably the most important church occasion of the year, but New Year has its secular side, too. Other widely celebrated religious holidays include the end of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting, and Easter. As for official holidays, Flag Day, August 24, is also important. (Presumably, starting in 1981, Redemption Day, April 12, will be a major holiday, too.)

(FIRST TEXT) New Year Eve

On New Year Eve, all the church in Liberia can be pack. My part, I go to church on that night to thank the Lord for having me stay to see the following year, and I also ask him to give me long life in the year to come.

The church service can start around about nine. But you will have to go soon or else you will have to carry chair, so it better to go around six-thirty or seven. Time the service start, the preacher will come pray, then the church choir will sing. After the song now, the pastor will come pray again to yall. Then different group will come sing, or different person will come pray for yall. You, if you got something to say on that day, you come up, you express your feelings. Sometime you talk all what you been doing during the year, and then you want to ask the Lord to help you so that you can't do any more bad thing. The people will pray and sing and preach until twelve o'clock. Then everybody will say "Happy New Year" because it after twelve, and we stay, sometime for five or ten minute after twelve. Then the pastor will come pray for everybody again. Then we all move from there.

When we move, we go out. The real Christian them, those that go to church everyday, their parent will not allow them to go out that same night. The next day before. But those that use to go on the eve of every season, before the day come, will go out that same night and stay having fine time

till daybreak. Some boys them, they go to church on New Year Eve just to look for woman, because that night the church can be pack--if you lucky, you can find your lover there. After church, you take your lover home; on your way going, yall make yall plan for the next day.

The next day now, yall go out to eat or go on the beach to meet your friend them and sometime go swimming. Then in the night, you will go out to dance or even to the show. Even to dance self, you buy beer or stout or anything you have, you drink. Then from there, you will come back and have a rest for another day.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

pack: packed, overcrowded, filled.

having me stay to see the following year: allowing me to live to the end of the year.

give me long life in the year to come: permit me to live throughout the year to come.

you will have to carry chair: you will have to bring a chair with you.

move from there: leave the church.

we go out: we go to parties or to night clubs.

go to church everyday: that is, go to church every Sunday.

the next day before: it is not until the next day that these people will socialize.

but those that use to go on the eve of every season, before the day come, will go out that same night and stay having fine time till daybreak: those who are used to starting every holiday the night before will go out that night and party all night. fine time entails drinking and, often, dancing.

to look for woman: to hunt for a girl friend.

you take your lover home: you escort your new-found love to her home.

on your way going: on your way.

yall plan: The second-person plural possessive adjective is yall rather than 'your.'

even to dance self: even at a dance.

or anything you have, you drink: or whatever you have, you drink.

Santa Claus and Oldman Beggar

One feature of major holidays--especially July 26, Christmas, and New Year's--is the appearance of musical troupes, most noticeably Santa Claus and Oldman Beggar groups.

Santa Claus is the name given to the troupe and also to its dancer. In addition to a dancer, the troupe comprises lead singers, a chorus, storytellers, drummers, and saw-scrapers. (The latter produce sound by running a carving knife up and down the length of a saw.) The larger groups have two men for each position except that of dancer, and the two men take turns. The participants are usually boys in their teens or men in their early twenties. What the connection is between this Liberian Santa Claus and the American Santa Claus is not clear; perhaps the fact that this type of dancing has traditionally been associated with Christmas was sufficient for it to be linked to the name Santa Claus. Nothing in the costume of a Liberian Santa Claus is similar to the clothing of the American one. (In fact, Liberians call the American Santa Claus "Oldman Beggar.")

Oldman Beggar groups are similar in composition to Santa Claus groups, but their performances are much less elaborate or polished, requiring less preparation and organization than those of a Santa Claus troupe.

The account which follows is of Santa Claus and Oldman Beggar groups in Buchanan. The speaker is talking extemporaneously, a fact which accounts for the number of hesitations and false starts in the narrative.

(SECOND TEXT) Santa Claus and Oldman Beggar

Like Santa Claus in Liberia: we form Santa Claus in Liberia to celebrate the twenty-fifth day, which is Christmas, and the first of January, which is New Year Day. You know. So we practice, whensoever the twenty-fifth day is coming, December twenty-fifth, we practice two week at the head of time, you know, (to) to get use to one another because the saw-scraper have to be use (to the) to the Santa Claus. And the Santa Claus (use to, uh, uh) have to be use to (the) the saw-scraper, too. And also the drum-beater, the speaker, and (the) the singer also.

Now, you have to get about twenty men (in) in the Santa Claus. Let's say one dancer, then you got two speaker, because we got four drums in Santa Claus. Then we got two speaker and eight drummer. Because two on each drum. You see?

The speaker work in (the) the Santa Claus is to introduce the man to the people that we going to, (to) to dance. Now the people like (to) to have speaker in the Santa Claus because some of them enjoy the way the speaker speak about the Santa Claus. So then the speaker will come and speak about the Santa Claus, saying that when he was traveling on the beach one Sunday (to) to swim, he met the Santa Claus lying down beside the sea, and he call him. When he call him, (he) he ask him, say, "Well, (I'm) I'm not anybody to harm you, but I was one of the best dancer in America, and also (a richer man) a rich man, and I travel to Africa, I decided to travel to Africa because I wanted to make money for the African, so please take me home and dress me, and I will dance for you and make money for you." So, anyway, he took him home, and then, he dress him, and then, he brought him on the street, and he start making money for him.

So then the speaker will go and stop there, and then afterward, (they will, the) the singer will have to sing a song. Then, after that, they start dancing. And the saw-scraper have to be good, and understand (the, the) the Santa Claus, too. Because without a saw-scraper, you cannot get the Santa Claus to dance. And also the drum-beater have to be good, too. Because the beating, (the) the saw-scraper going by the drummer, and the Santa Claus going by the (saw, uh) saw-scraper. So, everybody have to be good.

Then you hear (the sound, the) the sound of the saw in the background: . . .

Then you hear the bass drum: . . . Then you hear the next drum to the bass drum: . . . Then you hear the other drum: . . . Then you hear the other: . . . Then you hear the bass drum: . . .

Then the Santa Claus will be dancing. And we use to have one boy they call YGC (in, in) in Bassa, he use to be the best dancer in Bassa. And he taught one (boy) guy they call Kpawiako. Kpawiako was just under the YGC man. But after YGC die before Kpawiako came and start dancing (for) for the county. I mean, this Kpawiako boy use to be good and YGC use to be dancing, too. When (YGC) they say YGC coming on this side, you see everybody standing on the road to YGC. Sometime he come with his twenty men, when you look behind him, he got about hundred-and-fifty people. Because they use to like his way of dancing.

Sometime he would climb on the lightpole, start dancing. When they say, "YGC waya here," sometime straight line from here, sometime two hour he will be on the ground dancing, two hour he will be on the ground dancing. Doing all kind of thing, jumping over hisself.

And Kpawiako, after he die, Kpawiako took over. Kpawiako use to do the same thing, too. Sometime Kpawiako would stand in the chair and be moving the chair around, moving the chair around like a car, sometime thirty minute to forty-five minutes, sometime he will get on the ground and dance like he giving a pushup on the ground, be rolling on the floor, rolling on the floor, about one hour. Sometime (he be) when they say, "Kpawiako nye wli o," that guy use to have his song for him. Kpawiako. And Kpawiako, that was his name. That was his real name. Kpawiako. But they use to sing in his name. So when they say,

Kpawiako nye wli o
Kpawiako nye wli o, a-a-a
nye wli o, ma-ma
nye wli o-o-o,
nye wli o, ma-ma.

Then (he would) he would put about five men together, five men in his line, be in line, then he come and jump over yall. Sometime he would jump over yall ten time, five time. (He will) he will get more money. Sometime the people will just be enjoying Kpawiako and give yall plenty money. When we come somewhere, (when we) when we see people got plenty money, then, umm! we put that song there. Kpawiako will be dancing, and he use to be one of the best dancer (in) in Buchanan. That why we form Santa Claus in Liberia, just to celebrate (the) the day.

But after Tolbert took over, everybody become weak because bag of rice was twenty-five dollars, and he said that Santa Claus fee should be twenty-five dollar for license. And everybody become weak. Because if bag of rice is twenty-five dollar, (I take my twenty-five dollar to go buy,) I will not take my twenty-five dollar to go buy a Santa Claus license for only one day or two days. I will not do it. So everybody become weak.

So, you know, they have something, too, in Liberia they call Oldman Beggar. And Oldman Beggar, too, they don't dance, they ain't get special clothes like the Santa Claus. They don't sew special clothes for them. Sometime old dogafleh coat, they will just take it and dress with it and fix theyself like pregnant woman. They will dress and put old clothes under the coat in a tee-shirt and make their belly big. Then they just come around you,

Oldman Beggar,
Down the Beggar,
Oldman Beggar,
Down the Beggar.

Sometime you give them five cent, they move (to the) to the next house. When they give them two cent, they go to the next house. (Why, so everybody change to, to, to,) all the Santa Claus change (to) to Oldman Beggar. (END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

two week at the head of time: two weeks ahead of time.

because we got four drums: and we have four drums.

he ask him: this should be, he answer him. The subsequent quotation is the Santa Claus's answer to the speaker (as reported by the speaker).

so, anyway, he took him home, and then, he dress him, and then, he brought him on the street, and he start making money for him: so the speaker took the Santa Claus home with him, dressed him, and brought him on the street, and the Santa Claus started making money for the speaker: Shifts of reference of the type which occurs with he and him in this sentence are not unusual in Liberian English.

the singer will have to sing a song: the singer will sing a song. The only obligation implied by the use of have to is that, in the usual order of a Santa Claus performance, the singer sings after the speaker has told his story and before the Santa Claus dances.

the next drum to the bass drum: the drum closest to the bass drum in pitch.

because the saw-scraper going by the drummer, and the Santa Claus going by the saw-scraper: As a general rule of West African dancing, the drums--or, often, a single drum in the ensemble--direct the dancers. That is, rhythmic patterns are used to convey instructions to the dancers. The same is true of the Santa Claus; here, the dancer takes his cues from the saw-scraper, who has received his cues from the drummer.

YGC: This acronym stands for "Young-Girl Chaser." Gbehwalahyee Mason, whose voice is heard on the tape, says that YGC's

> . . . girl friend killed him because he told the girl he didn't want the girl again. So the girl felt bad. She said because the man was the best dancer he felt that he could get any girl at any time, so he dropped her. So . . . she killed the boy with fufu, poisoned the boy in fufu.

("He didn't want the girl again" means 'he didn't want to be her lover any longer.')

Kpawiako was just under the YGC man: Kpawiako was studying under YGC and did not himself dance in public at that time.

dancing for the county: dancing publicly, dancing for all the county to see.

waya: a dance maneuver in which the dancer bends his legs and moves his knees together and apart rapidly and repeatedly.

straight line from here: that is, people were lined up for a long way.

after he die: after YGC died.

Kpawiako nye wli o: Bassa for 'Kpawiako will see money'; that is, 'Kpawiako will get rich.'

more money: a lot of money.

everybody become weak: interest died out. to be weak (to do something) is 'to lack enthusiasm, inclination, or even ability.'

Santa Claus fee should be twenty-five dollar for license: every Santa Claus troupe was required to pay twenty-five dollars for a license; without it, the troupe was not allowed to perform.

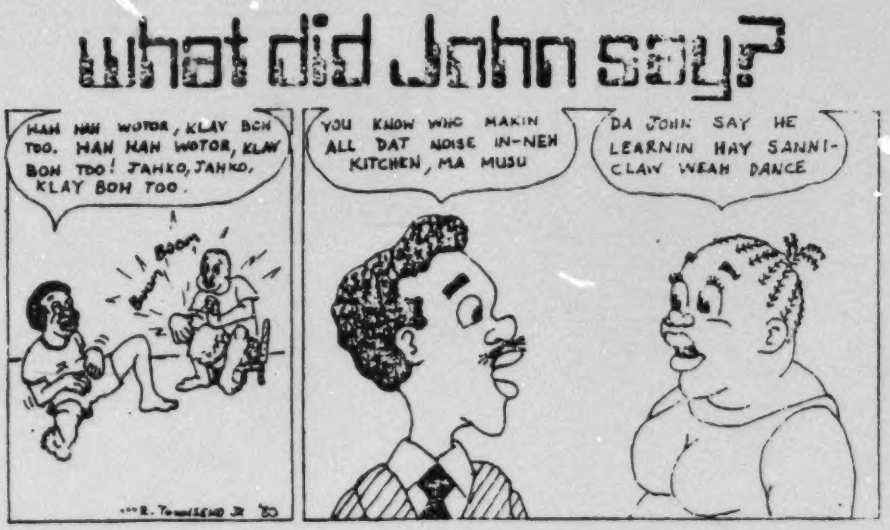
for only one day or two days: That is usually how long the season lasted for any one holiday.

they don't dance: In fact, Oldman Beggar troupes have a dancer, but the performance usually is far less accomplished.

special clothes: a special costume.

dogafleh: used clothing, usually from the U.S., which is sold on Waterside in Monrovia and elsewhere.

In one of the first episodes of What Did John Say? (before many of the spelling conventions had been adopted), John was practicing his own Santa Claus dance.


what did John say?
HAH HAH WOTOR, KLAY BOH TOO. HAH HAH WOTOR, KLAY BOH TOO! JAHKO, JAHKO, KLAY BOH TOO.
BOOM
YOU KNOW WHO MAKIN ALL DAT NOISE IN-NEH KITCHEN, MA MUSU
DA JOHN SAY HE LEARNIN HAY SANNI-CLAW WEAH DANCE

1) JOHN: Hot-hot water, kle boh-tu. Hot-hot water, kle boh-tu! Jocko, jocko, kle boh-tu.

2) PA: You know who making all that noise in the kitchen, Ma Musu?

MA MUSU: That John say he learning his Santa Claus Weah dance.

hot-hot water, kle boh-tu, jocko: These are all Santa Claus dance movements. hot-hot water involves the imitation of someone using very hot water to take a bath. kle boh-tu is another name for crawcraw, a type of scabies. The dancer scratches vigorously. jocko is a name for a monkey. The dancer imitates a monkey.

Santa Claus Weah: Anotner name for Santa Claus dancing is Santa Claus Weah dancing.

You have now been introduced to Monrovia's transportation system, been given some idea of how to get around in Monrovia, and been shown several different aspects of Monrovia life. But what is Monrovia all about? For most Volunteers, it is a place to come to for supplies and for a weekend away from it all. For Liberians, Monrovia is more, much more.

Monrovia is the big city. It is the center of commerce, of the government, and of entertainment. It boasts a bustling port, crowded markets, traffic jams, and countless churches and bars. Monrovia is a money-town: you must have money in order to survive, but jobs are numerous. Monrovia draws the bright, the hopeful, and the up-and-coming, but it also collects the undesirable, the ones who come in order to elude the restraints of smaller, more traditionally oriented communities.

To many Liberians, Monrovia is the best place--and the worst place--in the country. Something is always happening in Monrovia: sometimes it's good, and sometimes it's not.

Some Liberian views as to Monrovia's advantages and drawbacks emerge in the discussion which follows.

(TEXT) Life in Monrovia

WIAH: Damn, man, this Monrovia here, people say, "Monrovia, Monrovia," but I ain't see no need of being in Monrovia, man.

FLOMO: What you mean?

WIAH: I mean the place just not good for people.

FLOMO: But the place sweet o, you boy.

WIAH: What kind of sweet?

FLOMO: Oh, got good-good thing in Monrovia.

WIAH: Like what?

FLOMO: My man, I coming. Youself you know, Monrovia the place for good time. They got so many cinema--Relda o, Roxy o, Sheila o, Gabriel o, and so and so. You want to go children's show, you go; you want to go night show, you go. And what about all the program they can put up to E.J. Roye and City Hall? I saw you the last time to E.J. Roye, the time Miatta o, Nimba Bird them were there. You want to tell me the people thing was not heavy?

WIAH: It was hip.

FLOMO: Ehhnh, you see. This town here not easy o, my man. Other thing again, person want, person can go disco and party down. You just want to sit there and zip on your beer, they got shop in every corner, Jack. Of course, not Monrovia one got shop or even disco. But in Monrovia, they can be boiling, man.

The other thing again, that the football business. The game here, they hot o, my man. People coming from all over to play: team like Green Eagle o, Black Star o, Hafia them.

And youself you know, every day something new happen here. New thing never finish here.

WIAH: My man, everything you talking, that so-so money thing. Picture show, E.J. Roye o, disco o, bar o, football game--who got brace to go all those place?

FLOMO: I ain't say you must go all those place. Man got to rest some time. But it not just fine time alone can make this place fine than in the country.

WIAH: What else?

FLOMO: My man, here you can get news of the whole country. Everyday you pay twenty-five cent, you read newspaper. What kind of newspaper they can sell in the country? And radio, too. You don't have to fight to listen to ELBC or ELWA. In the country, man, sometime the radio business hard. In fact self, sometime the only way the people in the country get their news, only by E-L-They-Say.

WIAH: My man, you not serious, man. You talking about disco and now E-L-They-Say. You can't see all the people suffering, man? Just take a walk downtown, man. You will see so many people, walking, just walking and

walking, and no point in the street. They don't know where they going, hey ain't got no food to eat. What kind of good place this? Just because you working, you got money, you say the place sweet. But in this Monrovia here, people suffering. Except your pocket full of money, you can't eat.

FLOMO: Yeah, it true. If you not working, you catch hard time here. Yet and still, plenty thing can be cheaper than in the country; thing that coming from abroad, you will find cheaper here. And plenty thing you can find here, you can't see them in the country. Sometime everything you want, you can see in Monrovia. And not just imported something can be easy to find. Meat o, fish o, greens o--anything you want. And look how the current can be strong, the water can be good.

WIAH: But not Monrovia one got current and good water.

FLOMO: Of course. But no place got plenty taxi like Monrovia. You can get taxi or bus to carry you anywhere in Monrovia. And anytime you want to go--in the day o, in the night o.

WIAH: You can get taxi to carry you inside West Point in the night?

FLOMO: OK, no.

WIAH: You see. Come talking about bus and taxi can carry you in so-so-and-so place, but no taxi driver fool to go inside West Point in the night. And not just West Point. You want to go inside New Krutown in the night, sometime you got to beg the driver before he agree. No, man, you come to this Monrovia here, you can't feel free because you got to hide yourself. If you got your little two-cent on you, you scared for rogue them to come around you.

This place got bad-bad people. You go around Gurley Street, Center Street in the night, pickpocket come around you, steal your watch, steal lady bag, they gone. And some of those wayo them, they dor just be forcing theyself on man, asking him for love, just to take his money. And the beach, my man, sometime in the day self you must be scared of the beach. Some of the Peace

Corps people dor go there, they ain't know, they lay down on the beach, they go to sleep. The rogue come now, they steal the people thing.

FLOMO: But they suppose to know we got good beach here--Cooper Beach o, Sugar Beach o--where plenty people dor go. It only when a person lay down in a place and the people not plenty, that trouble coming o.

Anyway, you can't say every corner of a place must be good. Some place bad, some place good. That why you got to know where you going and how to walk in the city. You don't just come and jump in the street and say, "I going this way, going the other way." You don't know those place. You don't know if the place that bad place or the place that good place. You suppose to find somebody who know the city, then, and let them help you to move around.

WIAH: But wait now. What makes the bathroom to be bad place?

FLOMO: What make the bathroom to be bad place?

WIAH: Yeah.

FLOMO: (There where) because there where all the waste product go.

WIAH: Yeah, but you see. In Monrovia you find all the waste product, my man. So it not a good place, I telling you.

FLOMO: No, but even if the waste product go in the bathroom, they got people to clean the bathroom. My man, you just want to get yourself someone who know the place. Then you can enjoy the city plenty. Really, this Rocktown, it fine o.

WIAH: Oh, so you know the city.

FLOMO: Yeah.

WIAH: Then, tell me now, Waterside, that good place?

FLOMO: Well, yeah.

WIAH: Oh, you say you know the city, but you don't know what can happen there? Those rogue them, they too tricky. One guy will come and knock you

on your side. When you turn that way, he say, "Excuse." But what you don't know, his friend fini picking your pocket. Those guy, they are professional, Jack. You don't feel the man hand self going in your pocket. Time you want to buy something now, you put your hand in your pocket, money say, "Find me." Those pickpocket them, they na lay. This Monrovia here, it full of tricky-tricky people.

FLOMO: Not everybody go down Waterside, they steal from them. That can only happen to stranger. The people that live here, they know those rogue. So when you move around there, you know how to hold your thing and how to move, what place to put your money.

WIAH: No, man. This place not good, man. Those professional rogue them, those pickpocket them, those krokroji people, those corner-corner people, those kata-kata people, those grona pekin them--they all here, just waiting to take man money. And the thing that can really hurt my heart, man can't get job self to see little money for the rogue them to steal.

FLOMO: My man, no place in this world can be perfect. But when you get yourself one little job, then you will see, this Monrovia here, if you working and you know how to move around, then the place too sweet. Moving up and down o, fine time o, enjoyment o, the taxi and bus business o, the way you can get what thing you looking for o, the chance to get job--all those thing got people weak to leave this place. Monrovia sweet o, you boy.

WIAH: OK. I agree with you. The thing you say, it true. But yourself you know, for man to enjoy in this place here, you got to take time.

(END OF TEXT)

NOTES

If Flomo's and Wiah's arguments are compared, Flomo is far ahead in number, at least. Wiah's only substantive objections to Monrovia were that certain parts of town are not safe and that poverty and unemployment are widespread.

Flomo, on the other hand, mentioned the excitement and entertainment to be found in Monrovia, the superior utilities and transportation systems, the greater availability of goods, and--at the end--the greater employment opportunities.

Despite the greater scope of Flomo's arguments, had this been a debate in a shop, most people there would probably have judged Wiah the winner. Three times Wiah trapped Flomo: the question about taxis into West Point at night, the question about bathrooms, and the comment, "Oh, so you know the city." Debating skills are highly prized in Liberia. They are cultivated in English and other Liberian languages in a number of ways. One popular way is through what folklorists call "dilemma tales," stories which end with a question such as "Which woman loved the hero most?" or "Which person in the story acted bad?" Members of the audience champion various points of view and debate their merits. To the extent that there is a winner, it is often the one who presents his or her arguments most deftly.

sweet: enjoyable, giving pleasure.

what kind of: Again, the use of this phrase indicates contempt.

got good-good thing in Monrovia: there are many good things in Monrovia. got can occur without a subject.

I coming: This is a conversational device, the thrust of which is 'I'll answer your question if you'll give me a chance to.' Ordinarily--that is, when it is not being used as a conversational device--it is what one says when he or she is leaving somewhere with the intention of returning imminently. Its American equivalent is 'I'm coming right back.'

Relda o, Roxy o, Sheila o, Gabriel o: Related to the "whether-or-not" o (examples of which are found in Units Two, Fourteen, and Fifteen) is the "list" o. When the latter is used, it usually occurs after every element in a list of items. (It is sometimes omitted after the final element in the list.)

and so and so: and so forth.

you want to go children's show, you go; you want to go night show, you go: If you want to go to the matinee, you go; if you want to go at night, you go.

E.J. Roye: the auditorium in the E.J. Roye Building. It and the Monrovia City Hall are frequently the sites of concerts, plays, and programs.

Miatta o, Nimba Bird them: Miatta Fahnbulleh and Nimba Bird are two of Liberia's most popular female vocalists. The them is used here as an associative plural: 'Miatta, Nimba Bird, and the other performers.'

the people thing: the people's thing; that is, the concert.

not easy: This is a slang expression with several related meanings. When a woman is described as not easy, it means that she is 'beautiful (and, often, stylishly dressed as well).' A party which is not easy is 'an intensely pleasurable one.' A building which is not easy is one which is 'ornate or

elaborate in its beauty.' In these three examples, not easy is a highly favorable term, and its application to Monrovia by Flomo is in this vein. To him, Monrovia is 'complex, attractive, and pleasure-giving.'

Besides these uses, not easy has other applications. When applied to a football match, not easy means 'hotly contested.' Similarly, when applied to a dispute, not easy means 'protracted and acrimonious.'

person want, person can go disco and party down: if you want to, you can go dancing at a disco.

zip: sip. When referring to cigarettes, to zip is 'to take a puff.'

shop: a small retail establishment selling a restricted number of items, usually including bread, soft drinks, beer and stout, hard liquor, some tinned goods, cookies, and some toilet articles. A larger establishment, with a more extensive range of merchandise and usually with dry goods for sale as well, is called a store. There is an additional distinction between shop and store: while either a black or a white might own a store, only blacks own shops. That is, a Lebanese-run establishment is always referred to as a store.

boiling: crowded, with a lot of drinking, merriment, and dancing.

Green Eagle, Black Star, Hafia them: Green Eagle is the Nigerian national team, Black Star is the Ghanaian national team, and Hafia is a renowned football club from Conakry, Guinea. While Green Eagle and Black Star come to play their Liberian counterpart, Lone Star, Hafia plays Monrovia clubs such as Barrolle and I.E. Here, them is used as an associative-plural marker: 'Green Eagle, Black Star, Hafia, and the other football teams.'

new thing never finish here: The supply of new phenomena is inexhaustible.

everything you talking, that so-so money thing: everything you're talking about requires money. Here, so-so means 'nothing but.' money thing refers to 'an item which costs money, particularly one which costs a lot of money.'

brace: a slang term for 'money.'

fine than in the country: There are a number of strategies for indicating comparison. Speakers furthest from Standard English would use fine past:

Monrovia fine past Conakry. 'Monrovia is more attractive than Conakry.'

Those closer to Standard English would use the simple form of an adjective but with than, as in Flomo's statement about Monrovia. Finally, many Liberians use the Standard English construction; that is, they use finer than.

ELBC and ELWA: Monrovia's two radio stations. ELBC is the government-owned station, and ELWA is a privately owned evangelical Christian station.

in the country: outside Monrovia.

the radio business hard: the reception is poor.

E-L-They-Say: a humorous name for rumors or hearsay. E-L are the first two call letters for any Liberian radio or television station; they-say or they-say they-say is 'hearsay.' (A person who wishes to establish that he or she was present when something was said or done will say,

I ain't say, "They say." 'This isn't second-hand knowledge.')

man, you not serious, man. You talking about disco and now E-L-They-Say: you're not being responsible; you're talking about frivolous things.

and no point: with no purpose.

what kind of good place this?: how can you say that this is a good place?

except: unless.

catch hard time: encounter serious difficulties.

current: electricity.

the water can be good: This is a reference to the relative accessibility of running water.

in the night: at night.

West Point: the community on the peninsula behind the Waterside General Market. It has the reputation of being unsafe, particularly at night.

come talking: an expression which indicates scorn for what another person has said.

in so-so-and-so place: to such and such a place.

no taxi driver fool to go inside West Point at night: no taxi driver would be so foolish as to drive his car into West Point at night.

agree: consent.

feel free: be relaxed.

you got to hide yourself: you have to make yourself inconspicuous (and conceal your belongings). Ordinarily, a person with wealth is expected to display it.

if you got your little two-cent on you: if you have a little money with you.

Gurley Street, Center Street: these streets, particularly around Carey Street and Benson Street, form the heart of Monrovia's night-life area.

Some wayo them, they dor just be forcing theyself on man, asking him for love, just to take his money: some prostitutes they just pick up men in order to roll them.

Cooper Beach o, Sugar Beach o: Neither of these beaches is in Monrovia

proper. Cooper Beach is near Schiefflin, and Sugar Beach is near ELWA in Paynesville.

you don't know if the place that bad place or the place that good place: you don't know whether or not a place is good.

Rocktown: a slang term for Monrovia. It is most often heard in the expression Rocktown boy, the Liberian equivalent of a 'city slicker.'

knock you on your side: bump against you, jostle you on your side.

excuse: excuse me.

you don't feel the man hand self going in your pocket: you don't even feel the man's hand going into your pocket.

time you want to buy something now: later, when you want to buy something.

money say, "Find me": the money is gone.

they na lay: they have run away, escaped.

not everybody go down Waterside, they steal from them: it's not everyone who goes to Waterside who has something stolen.

those krokroji people, those corner-corner people, those kata-kata people: All of these are names for con men, cheats, and rascals.

grona pekin them: juvenile delinquents and street urchins.

to see little money: to acquire a little money.

moving up and down: the social life.

all those thing got people weak to leave this place: all those things have people reluctant to leave.

(In this early episode of What Did John Say?, the spelling is slightly different. A! in the second panel is pronounced [e]. awoh in the third panel is pronounced [ewɔ]).

what did John say?
AHN WOHN YOU AGAIN YAH REBECCA!
A! MENH! JOHN MENH! WEH HAPPIN AGAIN!
GAS GONN TO TWO DALOH EHN AH NO BUS FEH COMIN GO UP AGAIN! YOU PAH YOU STEEN WAY GAHNOSVAY SO AHN AIN'H BRA. LEMME LEE YOR BIZNAI LONE NAH NAH SO MAH PAHRAY KEHN SUFFAH

1) JOHN: I ain't want you again, yah, Rebecca!

2) REBECCA: Ay! Man! John, man! What happen again!

3) JOHN: Gas gone to two dollar, and I know bus fare coming go up again. You part, you staying way Gardnersville, so I ain't able, bra. Let me leave your business alone now-now so my pocket can't suffer.

I ain't want you again: I don't want to be your lover anymore.

what happen again: what happened now?

gas gone to two dollar: the cost of a gallon of gas has gone to two dollars.

you part, you staying way Gardnersville, so I ain't able: you're living all the way out in Gardnersville (a forty-five-cent bus-ride from Monrovia), so I'm not able to continue the relationship.

let me leave your business now-now so my pocket can't suffer: let me end our relationship for now so that my pocket won't suffer.

what did John say ?

created by o. eugene shaw artist: reggie townsend, jr.

AH SAY MAH MAN, KAHN CREDAY ME DOLLA MAN.
CREDAY YOU WHA!!! SHE-AY! AHN TIN YOU MEAN BISNAY MAN. HAH, YOU FINI BROKE ENH?
YOUN KNOW FOH TRUE, BOH DE HAH TAHN IN MONROVIA DIS TAHN, EH HELL OH! AHN GAH WOHN SEN, ENH EHRAY BODY AH ASS, DEI CRYIN PO MUF.

1) JOHN: I say, my man, come credit me dollar, man.

2) JOHN'S FRIEND: Credit you what!!! shee-it! I ain't think you mean business, man. How, you fini broke, enh?

3) JOHN: You ain't know for true, but the hard time in Monrovia this time, it hell o! I ain't got one cent, and everybody I ask, they crying poor mouth.

credit: to lend.

I ain't think you mean business: you can't be serious.

how: what.

fini: here, completely.

you ain't know for true: you really don't know.

the hard time in Monrovia this time, it hell o!: times are really rough in Monrovia these days.

they crying poor mouth: they're telling me they're broke, too.

Proverbs

In Liberia and throughout Africa, the body of proverbs and the body of folk tales form repositories of wisdom. In Liberia, the person who can see to the heart of a situation and express it with a proverb is highly respected, and the speaker who uses a well-chosen proverb is listened to.

Proverbs have come into Liberian English from a number of sources. Some are direct translations of proverbs found in other Liberian languages. For example, the following proverb comes directly into English from Grebo:

Baby goat say: You ain't get ma to throw you in the air, you throw yourself.	'If you have no one to depend upon, depend upon yourself.'

Other Liberian English proverbs are found in English-speaking communities along the West African coast; whether they originated in Liberia or elsewhere is not easily determined. Examples of these are the following:

Your house won't sell you, the street can't buy you.	'If your family stands solidly behind you, you cannot be brought down.'
Steal from steal make God laugh.	'The person who steals from a thief amuses God.'

In Sierra Leonean Krio, the latter proverb is rendered as "Tif tif, God laugh." (tif comes from Standard English 'thief.')

Still other proverbs arose here in recent times (but are not apparently used outside Liberia). For example,

Fante man never say his boney rotten.	'A fishmonger won't tell you his fish is no good, i.e., a person will not reveal information injurious to his own interests.'

Finally, some Liberian English proverbs came with the Settlers from the United States. Some of these, however, like the one presented here, have taken on new meanings. This proverb is based on the familiar one about the pot calling the kettle black. But, as interpreted here, it also carries a warning against permitting a scoundrel to vouch for a scoundrel.

(FIRST TEXT) A Proverb

Pot telling teakettle, "Your butt is black; cookspoon, that my wisness":

You cannot take a rogue to be the rogue's wisness in time of court. Because you know both of them can steal. Now the pot and the cookspoon are usually

together, and the pots know very well, his butt is always black because it never move from on fire. Everyday (the) somebody must cook inside to eat. Then telling the teakettle, "Your butt is blacker than mine; cookspoon, that my wisness," whereby, the cookspoon will never move from behind pot, because both of them are friends.

(END OF FIRST TEXT)

NOTES

cookspoon: a long-handled stirring spoon.

wisness: This is the usual Liberian English pronunciation of 'witness.' (Ordinarily, however, it is spelled 'witness' in Liberia, too.)

the pots know: the pot knows. One difference between Standard English and non-standard Liberian dialects of English--perhaps the single most salient one to a Liberian ear--is the great number of word-final s's present in Standard English but absent from non-standard Liberian varieties: -s on most plural nouns, -'s on possessives, and -s on third-person singular present tense forms. Thus, it sometimes happens that Liberians aiming at Standard English will add s's but in inappropriate places.

it never move from on fire: the pot's place is on the fire.

everyday somebody must cook inside to eat: someone cooks food inside the pot everyday.

the cookspoon will never move from behind pot: the cookspoon will never abandon or betray the pot.

Here are some other Liberian English proverbs and their meanings:

The same leaf what taste sweet in goat mouth, that the leaf what run his stomach.	'The very thing which gives you pleasure now may one day prove your downfall.'

(run his stomach: cause diarrhea.)

The dog got to trust his bunga before he swallow the bone.	'Look before you leap.'

(trust: be able to rely on. The sign sometimes seen on buses, "Trust your pocket before entering," means 'Make sure you have money before you board the bus.')

bunga: derriere.)

Hurry-hurry bust trousers.	'Haste makes waste.'
The fish start rotting from the head.	'The faults of an organization can be traced to the faults of the leader.'
Cow what ain't get tail, God will drive the fly.	'God will provide.'
Monkey thought he was a man till fine shot brought him down.	'Pride goeth before the fall.'

(fine shot: a type of lead shot.)

Monkey jam, eat pepper.	'Adversity forces us to do that which we would not do under normal circumstances.'

(jam: presšed or bŏset by difficulties.)

Monkey never leave his tail behind.	'A scoundrel can't sham virtue forever; sooner or later, his or her character will come out.' or 'One never forgets those things which are valuable to him or her; for example, a good carpenter never forgets to bring his tools.'
You must not eat crab with shame.	'If you are doing something which benefits you but which might cause people to talk about you, go ahead--don't worry about what they might say.'

(To eat crab, it is necessary to make a lot of noise and thereby draw attention to oneself.)

In addition to these proverbs, there are many, many more. Here are some:

Cassava leaf not for goat one.

Pull rope, rope pull bush.

Short cut kill black deer.

Small boy can run, but he don't know how to hide.

Play, play kill bird.

Monkey work, baboon draw.

Monkey baby die, monkey never cry, baboon cry.

There were fly before dog ear got sore.

Softly softly catch monkey.

Except you put fire on turtle back, he will never move.

You sitting on my shoulder; yet and still you say I'm stink.

Raccoon know the leaf he wipe his butt with.

Free ride, free death.

Sabi no worry.

Small-small talk, big-big palaver.

Family tree can bend, but it can't break.

Small shame better than big shame.

Empty bag can't stand.

You must not fatten frog for snake.

You must not send cat to mind stockfish.

Through crab, crawfish drink water.

Patient dog get the fat bone.

Sabi man die careless way.

Folk Tales

As well as proverbs, Liberia has a wealth of folk tales. Traditionally, they have been told on moonlit nights by the elders. The one presented here has a familiar plot; versions of this story are told all over the world. Wherever it is told, the moral is that one should not repay good with evil. In Liberia, where society has traditionally stressed filial devotion and obedience, the tale becomes a lesson in them as well.

As a preliminary to the folk tale, it is appropriate to consider a problem which many non-Liberians have when hearing a Liberian folk tale or, indeed, any Liberian narrative involving more than one person: keeping straight which character said what or did what.

Here are three tips to help you to do this:

1) When dialogue is being reported, a switch in speaker can be signalled by the use of say. Sometimes a subject is present for say--"he say," "the queen say"--but often it is not. (This use of say was discussed in Unit Seven.)

Here is a segment from the transcript of the folk tale which follows. The two speakers are a genie (spirit) and an old man.

. . . the genie say here the rock here, say oh, yeah? say yeah, say but how the boy took you from there?, he say I was between the place.

Since every use of say signals a change of speaker and since the genie is identified as opening the conversation, then it is clear that the conversation breaks down in this way.

. . . the genie said, "Here the rock here."
The old man said, "Oh, yeah?"
The genie said, "Yeah."
The old man asked, "But how the boy took you from there?"
The genie answered, "I was between the place."

2) If the narrative involves both men and women, don't rely too heavily upon he as indicating a male character and she a female. In more standard-like speech, it is true, the distinction between he and she is observed and violations are stigmatized. In less standard-like speech, however, either he or she may apply to any person. (In the other Liberian languages, there is a single third-person singular pronoun for all humans. Some languages--for example, Kru and Grebo--make a distinction between animate and inanimate objects, but no language makes a gender distinction in the pronoun system.) In the same way that either he or she is applied to any person, it also happens that, for some speakers, either son or daughter may be applied to someone's child, and either mother or father may be applied to someone's parent. However, these occurrences are not nearly so widespread as the he-she reversal.

3) Not all Standard English rules relating pronouns to their antecedents can be applied to non-standard varieties of Liberian English. Rather, the hearer must rely especially heavily on context in order to determine each pronoun's antecedent.

This can be illustrated by the following sentence, which appeared in Unit Sixteen:

> So, anyway, he took him home, and then, he dress him, and then, he brought him on the street, and he start making money for him.

If you had been following the story, you would expect these things to happen: the speaker (the storyteller) is the one to dress the Santa Claus, and the speaker is the one to bring the Santa Claus out on the street, but it is the Santa Claus who starts making money for the speaker. The previous sentence in the narrative had ended with the Santa Claus telling the speaker

> . . . please take me home and dress me, and I will dance for you and make money for you.

Thus, the context establishes that there is only one likely way for the pronouns to be interpreted--even though this means that the references to he and him must be switched in mid-sentence.

In listening to the folk tale presented here, see if you can follow the action and the dialogue and know in every case who did what and who said what. (The comment above about he/she does not apply, but the other two comments do.)

(SECOND TEXT) A Folk Tale

Once upon a time, (time),

Now this other boy, he was a hunter. Now he use to hunt for his pa; his ma has die, so his ma came to him, you know, to hunt, more especially to hunt. So he use to go in the bush and hunt. When that boy go, the whole house would full up with so-so meat, just one day hunting. The boy, he dor go and hunt for his pa, then when they sell the meat, the money, the pa take it.

So, now certain of the forest you can't go and hunt there because they got genie there. So the boy pa use to advise him.

He say, "Oh, forget it, man. Nobody can do me anything. Since my ma na die and you here with me, I know nobody will harm me, and no genie can tamper with me."

So they went. (Af- . . .) The boy went to hunt one day. When he went, he hunt hunt hunt. He brought the group of meat home, the first group. He brought the meat home. The second time he went there (to), he kill about fifty. So while he was moving it, then (the) he saw the genie, between the rock. Big rock. The thing join the genie like this. So the genie call the boy, he say, "Oh! Pekin, what you doing here?"

He say, "No, I came to hunt, pa."

He say, "Ay-yah, please move me from here. I been here for almost two year now and nobody, I couldn't get anybody to move me from here. I don't know this rock was just sitting down like this. As soon I pass between it, it just join me together."

So the boy say, "Oh, for true?"

He say, "Yeah."

He say, "OK, I coming. Let me go hunt small."

Say, "Ay, man. I dying, man. I beg you. I hold you foot. I hold you foot, my son."

He say, "OK. Let me go hunt first."

He left the genie, then he went and hunted. Hunted for meat. He brought the meat. The second day, he went and told the pa, he say, "Pa, I went to the place today. I saw one genie between the rock, but the genie say (I should move) I should move him. So I don't know what to do, I don't know whether I should move him."

The pa say, "No, don't do that. Don't move the genie. Maybe when, if you move that genie, since the genie say, I mean he been there for two years, sometime the genie will be hungry, and he will not get no meat, he will eat you. So don't do it."

So he went. Stay two weeks, the genie was still there. Now (the) the boy use to pass by the genie every day. The genie use to beg the boy, the boy would not do it. So he hunt, hunt for almost three months. The fourth own, he came to the genie, the genie say, "Hey, man, I dying, man. I hungry, so please move me."

So the boy say, "OK, I will move you."

So when the boy move him, right away he say, "Oh! henh! Before I eat anything or before I do anything, I got to eat you."

The boy say, "Well, here all the meat here I been killing, you can eat some of the meat."

Say, "No! Since you here now, I will eat you first before I eat any of this meat. Because you had no right moving me from this place."

So the boy say, "Oh? That bad I did to you? Because (the, the) you was between the rock, you got no way to move, you say you stay there two years now, you can't move so I try and move you. You say you want to eat me."

Say, "Yeah."

So he and the boy were talking it. Almost two hour they were on it.

The boy say, "All the meat, (you can, I can) you can have all the meat, man. You can eat it. Don't eat me. I beg you. Because I, I the only child of (my) my pa. And my ma has pass away. So (my) my ma behind me to hunt for my pa so we can get little money. So I beg you, don't, don't, don't eat me."

The genie say, "I will eat you o."

So the boy ran from the genie. He went and climb one tree. The genie came and move the boy from there. The little boy drop. When the boy drop, he wanted to eat the boy. The boy say, "OK. Since you say you want to eat me, let's go to my pa because my pa say anything happen to me, if I come hunt, anything happen to me, we should go to him. So let's go to my pa."

The genie say, "Oh, man (I, I) I ready to go to your pa."

So they went. When they got to the pa, the papie say, "What happen?"

He say, "Oh! I behind your son. Your son ain't do nothing bad to me. The little boy was hunting, and he saw me between (the little) the rock. So he move me from the place. I beg him because I stay there two year now. Old man, I ain't eat anything yet, I hungry. Two year, whole two year. You see. S I ain't eat anything yet. I say I wanted to eat your son because he took me from the place. So he say we should come to you."

He say, "Oh, yes, man, I happy! Because I been advising this boy, he the only child I get and his ma na die, and he left with me, we can't get no money, just to go hunt and get meat. I told him not to go in that forest, still he say he want to go on that side to hunt. So, since he na move you, I been advising him, I even want to kill him, only thing if I

kill him, the government will hold me, you see, about killing my own son. So let's go, let's go to the place (the) the boy took you from, then (I will, I will, I will, I will) I will let you kill him."

So they went. When they went, the genie was in front, man, the genie was happy. When they got to the rock, (the pek- ...the, the) the boy say, "Here the rock," and the genie say, "Here the rock here."

Say, "Oh, yeah?"

Say, "Yeah."

Say, "But how the boy took you from there?"

He say, "I was between the place."

(The) The old man say, "No, man, I don't see it yet. But go there, let me see."

So he went back to the place, and the rock just join him up like this. The one that was first, oh, man, that was easy one. This one that join him, I say the whole neck was inside. So, the boy pa ask him, "(That how my) That how you was and my son took you out?"

He say, "Yeah."

Say, "OK. You know what happen?"

He say, "No."

He say, "Ay. You know this boy, (he) he the only son I got. And he dor hunt for me, he dor make money for me. His ma na die, and we poor, we ain't get no food. This boy, he dor go hunt for me, bring the meat, sell it before we buy rice to eat. You see? Then you say you want to kill my son, you think (my) my own blood, I will let you kill my son? I don't know where you coming from. Because you were jam between that rock and the boy took you out, you say (you want) you going to eat the boy.

"But my son, you see today, if your pa tell you anything or your ma

tell you anything, your parents tell you anything, agree with them. I was born before you. Even though you making money for me, but if I tell you anything, from today, agree with it.

"You, genie, you will stay right there and you die. The thing the boy did to you, that not bad thing by taking you from between that rock. But you will stay there. You think I will kill my own son? You will stay there."

So the genie stay there.

So that is the end of my story.

(END OF SECOND TEXT)

NOTES

once upon a time . . . time: Folk tales in most, if not all, Liberian languages begin with some kind of formulaic exchange between the storyteller and the audience. In Liberian English, the tale begins with the storyteller saying, "Once upon a time," and the audience responding, "Time."

this other boy: one boy.

his ma came to him: after she died, his mother appeared to him.

more especially, to hunt: that is, to do nothing but hunt. (This is an idiosyncratic usage, a "filler.")

when that boy go: when the boy went hunting and returned home with what he had killed.

full up: fill up.

just one day hunting: just from one day's hunting.

then when they sell the meat, the money, the pa take it: then when they sold the meat, the boy's father would take the money. Placing the money at the beginning of the final clause serves to emphasize it.

certain of the forest: a part of the forest. The word forest is not widely used in Liberia. Its use is ordinarily confined to folk tales, academic contexts ("the tropical rain forest"), and the lumber industry. In ordinary conversation, people would use bush rather than forest.

genie: spirit. (The word is pronounced [jinay].)

advise: warn.

he say, "Oh, forget it, man": the boy said, "Oh, don't worry about it."

nobody can do me anything: nobody can do anything to me.

since my ma na die and you here with me, I know nobody will harm me, and no genie can tamper with me: my mother will protect me from spirits, and you will protect me from the living.

so they went: that is, time passed.

he hunt hunt hunt: Again, repetition of the verb indicates that the action continued for a long time.

the group of meat: the carcasses of the anima's. meat can mean 'animal (alive or dead), particularly a game animal.'

the thing join the genie: the genie was trapped between two rocks.

ay-yah: an expression of distress. Often, it is used as an expression of sympathy towards someone else's plight.

I d'n't know: I didn't know.

plase move me from here: please remove, i.e. rescue, me from here.

I coming: I'm coming back.

hunt small: hunt for a little while.

I hold you foot: an expression of strong pleading.

stay two weeks: two weeks passed.

you had no right moving me from this place: you were wrong to rescue me.

that bad I did to you?: Did I wrong you by freeing you?

talking it: discussing it.

they were on it: here, they were arguing.

my ma behind me to hunt: my mother urged me to hunt. to be behind someone means 'to place pressure persistently on someone,' for example,

Move from behind me.	'Stop bothering me.'
They were just behind him for the money.	'They kept asking him for the money.'

papie: a familiar expression or term of address for an old man.

he say, "Oh! I behind your son": the genie said, "Oh! I'm after your son."

we can't get no money, just to go hunt and get meat: we can't get any money except the little bit we get by the boy's hunting.

the government will hold me, you see, about killing my son: the government would put me in jail, you see, for the killing of my son.

the one that was first, oh, man, that was easy one: the way in which the genie had been trapped the first time was nothing compared to what happened the second time.

the whole neck was inside: his neck was completely trapped.

you know what happen?: do you know what I have to say? This is a conversational device which says, "Listen to what I am about to say." Thus, in a dispute between two parties, a third party (or one of the parties in the dispute) may say, "You know what happen?" and then proceed to make suggestions as to how to resolve the dispute.

this boy . . . bring the meat, sell it before we buy rice to eat: Unless the boy brings game from the forest and sells it, we don't have any money to buy rice with.

you think my own blood, I will let you kill my son?: did you think I would let you kill my own flesh and blood?

I don't know where you coming from: I don't know what gave you that idea.

agree with them: do what they tell you.

that not bad thing by taking you from between that rock: it was not evil for the boy to rescue you.

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